



YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE!

*The Gospel According to Paul:
Romans*

BOB UTLEY
PROFESSOR OF HERMENEUTICS
(BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION)

*STUDY GUIDE COMMENTARY SERIES
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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	Analytical Key to the Old Testament by John Joseph Owens
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard
BAGD	A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature, Walter Bauer, 2 nd edition by F. W. Gingrich and Fredrick Danker
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, GBS, 1997
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition

NIDNTT	New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OTPG	Old Testament Parsing Guide by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TCNT	The Twentieth Century New Testament
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Robert Young
ZPBE	Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us overcome our biases.

First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide an introduction to each book of the Bible.

Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

1. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS⁴). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.
2. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a mid point between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
4. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS⁴ and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
5. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

Third Principle

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley
East Texas Baptist University
June 27, 1996

A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

I. Presuppositions

- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.

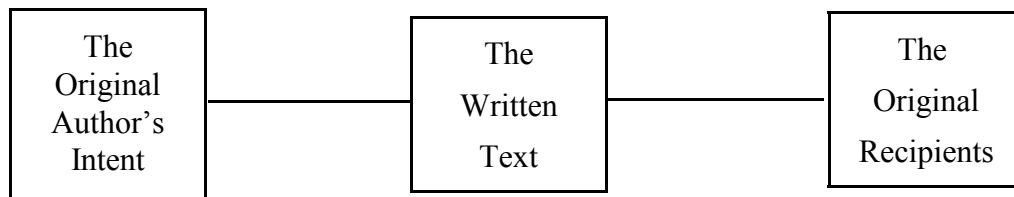
- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author’s intent, many indicators point in its direction:
 1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
 2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
 3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
 4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
 5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
 6. the words chosen to present the message
 7. parallel passages

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

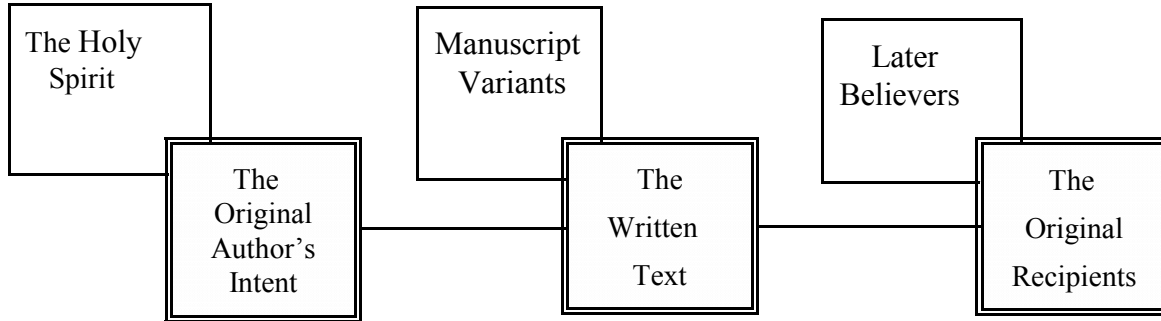
II. Inappropriate Methods

- A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author’s intent or the larger context. This is often called “proof-texting.”
- B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author’s intent.
- E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one’s own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author’s purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker’s authority. This is often referred to as “reader response” (“what-the-text-means-to-me” interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) “reader response” interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: “The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries.” This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Three areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author's
 - a. historical setting
 - b. literary context
2. the original author's choice of
 - a. grammatical structures (syntax)
 - b. contemporary word usage
 - c. genre
3. our understanding of appropriate
 - a. relevant parallel passages
 - b. relationship between doctrines (paradox)

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

- A. The first reading cycle
 1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
 3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
 4. Identify the predominant literary genre
 - a. Old Testament
 - (1) Hebrew narrative
 - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
 - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
 - (4) Law codes
 - b. New Testament
 - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
 - (2) Parables (Gospels)
 - (3) Letters/epistles
 - (4) Apocalyptic literature
- B. The second reading cycle
 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
 2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
 3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
- C. The third reading cycle
 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
 2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
 - a. the author
 - b. the date
 - c. the recipients
 - d. the specific reason for writing
 - e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
 - f. references to historical people and events
 3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
 4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
- D. The fourth reading cycle
 1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)

- b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
- 2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
 - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
 - c. contrasting concepts
- 3. List the following items
 - a. significant terms
 - b. unusual terms
 - c. important grammatical structures
 - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
- 4. Look for relevant parallel passages
 - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
 - (1) “systematic theology” books
 - (2) reference Bibles
 - (3) concordances
 - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
 - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
- 5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - a. study Bibles
 - b. Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
 - c. Bible introductions
 - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as “understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day.”

Application must follow interpretation of the original author’s intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say “thus saith the Lord,” we must abide by the original author’s intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, “our” principles—not the text’s principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed

a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

- A. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:

“The illumination comes to the minds of God’s people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God’s true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture.”

- B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:

According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. “To read the Bible *as God’s word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God’s Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God.”

- C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:

“No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books.”

VI. This Commentary’s Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

- A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done “reading cycle #3” check this information.

- B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
- C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
 1. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised(UBS⁴)
 2. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
 3. The New King James Version (NKJV)
 4. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
 5. Today's English Version (TEV)
 6. The Jerusalem Bible (JB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

- D. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
 1. literary context
 2. historical, cultural insights
 3. grammatical information
 4. word studies
 5. relevant parallel passages
- E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
 1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the "Textus Receptus."
 2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
 3. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
 4. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
- F. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
 1. manuscript variations
 2. alternate word meanings
 3. grammatically difficult texts and structure
 4. ambiguous texts

Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
- G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS

OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. Romans is the most systematic and logical doctrinal book of the Apostle Paul. It was affected by circumstances in Rome, therefore, it is an “occasional” document. Something occurred that caused Paul to write the letter. However it is the most neutral of Paul’s writings, in that Paul’s way of dealing with the problem (possibly the jealousy between believing Jewish and Gentile leadership, cf. 14:1-15:13) was a clear presentation of the gospel and its implications for daily life.
- B. Romans is the theological development of the truths of Galatians. Ephesians is the development of Romans into a summary cyclical letter. Paul’s gospel did not change but his way of presenting it did!
- C. Paul’s presentation of the gospel in Romans has impacted the church’s life in every age.
 - 1. Augustine was converted in A.D. 386 reading Romans 13:13-14.
 - 2. Martin Luther’s understanding of salvation was radically changed in A.D. 1513 as he compared Ps. 31:1 to Rom. 1:17 (cf. Hab. 2:4).
 - 3. John Wesley, walking by a Mennonite meeting in London in A.D. 1738, was converted after hearing Luther’s sermon on the introduction to Romans being read because the assigned preacher did not show up!
- D. To know Romans is to know Christianity! The letter shapes the life and teachings of Jesus into bedrock truths for the Church of all ages. Martin Luther said of it, “The chief book in the NT and the purest gospel!”
- E. I always encourage new believers to start reading the Bible every day. I recommend to begin with three NT books.
 - 1. the Gospel of John, to understand Jesus
 - 2. the book of Romans, to understand Jesus’ teachings applied to the churches
 - 3. I John, to know how to live out the gospel in everyday life

AUTHOR

Paul was definitely the author. His typical greeting is found in 1:1. It is generally agreed that Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” was bad eyesight, therefore, he did not physically write this letter himself, but he used a scribe, Tertius (cf. 16:22).

DATE

- A. The probable date for the authorship of Romans is A.D. 56-58. This is one of the few New Testament books which can be dated fairly accurately. This is done by comparing Acts 20:2ff with Romans 15:17ff. Romans was probably written at Corinth toward the end of Paul’s third missionary journey, just before he left for Jerusalem.

- B. Possible chronology of Paul’s writings following F. F. Bruce and Murry Harris with minor adaptations.

<u>Book</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place of Writing</u>	<u>Relation to Acts</u>
1. Galatians	48	Syrian Antioch	14:28; 15:2
2. I Thessalonians	50	Corinth	18:5
3. II Thessalonians	50	Corinth	
4. I Corinthians	55	Ephesus	19:20
5. II Corinthians	56	Macedonia	20:2
6. Romans	57	Corinth	20:3
7.-10. Prison Letters			
Colossians	early 60's		
Ephesians	early 60's	Rome	
Philemon	early 60's		
Philippians	late 62-63		28:30-31
11.-13. Fourth Missionary Journey			
I Timothy	63 (or later,	Macedonia	
Titus	63 but before	Ephesus (?)	
II Timothy	63 A.D. 64)	Rome	

RECIPIENTS

The letter states its destination as Rome. We do not know who founded the church at Rome.

- A. It may have been some of the people who were visiting Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and were converted and returned home to start a church (cf. Acts 2:10).
- B. It could have been disciples who fled the persecution in Jerusalem after the death of Stephen (cf. Acts 8:4).
- C. It could have been converts from Paul’s missionary journeys who traveled to Rome. Paul had never visited this church, but he longed to (cf. Acts 19:21). He had many friends there (cf. Romans 16).

Apparently his plan was to visit Rome on his way to Spain (cf. Rom. 15:28) after his trip to Jerusalem with the “love gift.” Paul felt his ministry in the eastern Mediterranean was finished. He sought new fields (cf. Rom. 15:20-23,28). The bearer of the letter from Paul in Corinth to Rome was Phoebe, a deaconess, who was traveling in that direction (cf. Rom. 16:1).

Why is this letter, written on the back streets of Corinth in the first century by a Jewish tentmaker, so valuable? Martin Luther called it “the chief book in the New Testament and the purest Gospel.” The value of this book is found in the fact that it is an in-depth explanation of the gospel by the converted rabbi, Saul of Tarsus, called to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Most of Paul’s letters are strongly colored by a local situation, but not Romans. It is a systematic presentation of an Apostle’s faith.

Did you realize, fellow Christian, that most of the technical terms used today to describe “faith” (“justification,” “imputation,” “adoption,” and “sanctification”) come from Romans? It is the theological development of the truths of Galatians. Pray for God to open to you this marvelous letter as we search together for His will for our lives today!

PURPOSE

- A. An appeal for help from the church in Rome for his missionary trip to Spain. Paul saw his apostolic work in the eastern Mediterranean finished (cf. 15:20-23,28).
- B. To address the problem in the Roman church between believing Jews and believing Gentiles. This was probably a result of the expulsion of all Jews from Rome and their later return. By then the Jewish Christian leaders had been replaced by Gentile Christian leaders.
- C. To introduce himself to the Roman church. There was much opposition to Paul from sincere converted Jews in Jerusalem (cf. Jerusalem Council of Acts 15), from insincere Jews (Judaizers in Galatians and II Corinthians 3, 10-13), and from Gentiles (Colossians, Ephesians) who tried to merge the gospel with their pet theories or philosophies (i.e., Gnosticism).
- D. Paul was accused of being a dangerous innovator, adding recklessly to Jesus' teaching. The book of Romans was his way of systematically defending himself by showing how his gospel was true, using the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus (the Gospels).

BRIEF OUTLINE

- A. Introduction (1:1-17)
 - 1. Salutation (1:1-7)
 - a. Author (1-5)
 - b. Destination (6-7a)
 - c. Greeting (7b)
 - 2. Occasion (1:8-15)
 - 3. Theme (1:16-17)
- B. Need for Divine Righteousness (1:18-3:20)
 - 1. Decline of the Gentile World (1:18-32)
 - 2. Hypocrisy of the Jews or Pagan Moralists (2:1-16)
 - 3. Judgment of the Jews (2:17-3:8)
 - 4. Universal Condemnation (3:9-20)
- C. What is Divine Righteousness (3:21-8:39)
 - 1. Righteousness by Faith Alone (3:21-31)
 - 2. The Basis of Righteousness: God's Promise (4:1-25)
 - a. Abraham's right standing (4:1-5)
 - b. David (4:6-8)
 - c. Abraham's Relation to Circumcision (4:9-12)
 - d. God's Promise to Abraham (4:13-25)
 - 3. The Attainment of Righteousness (5:1-21)
 - a. The subjective aspect: unmerited love, unequalled joy (5:1-5)
 - b. the objective basis: God's amazing love (5:6-11)
 - c. Adam/Christ typology: Adam's offense, God's provision (5:12-21)
 - 4. Divine righteousness must issue in personal righteousness (6:1-7:25)
 - a. Freed from sin (6:1-14)
 - (1) A supposed objection (6:1-2)

- (2) The meaning of baptism (6:3-14)
 - b. Satan's slave or God's slave: your choice (6:15-23)
 - c. Man's marriage to the Law (7:1-6)
 - d. The Law is good, but sin prevents the good (7:7-14)
 - e. The eternal struggle of good and evil in the believer (7:15-25)
 - 5. The observable results of divine righteousness (8:1-39)
 - a. Life in the Spirit (8:1-17)
 - b. The redemption of creation (8:18-25)
 - c. The Spirit's constant help (8:26-30)
 - d. The judicial triumph of justification by faith (8:31-39)

- D. The Divine Purpose for All Humanity (9:1-11:32)
 - 1. The election of Israel (9:1-33)
 - a. Real heirs of faith (9:1-13)
 - b. Sovereignty of God (9:14-26)
 - c. God's universal plan includes the heathen (9:27-33)
 - 2. The salvation of Israel (10:1-21)
 - a. God's righteousness vs. mankind's righteousness (10:1-13)
 - b. God's mercy necessitates messengers, a call for world missions (10:14-18)
 - c. Israel's continued disbelief in Christ (10:19-21)
 - 3. The failure of Israel (11:1-36)
 - a. The Jewish remnant (11:1-10)
 - b. Jewish jealousy (11:11-24)
 - c. Israel's temporary blindness (11:25-32)
 - d. Paul's outburst of praise (11:33-36)

- E. The Result of the Gift of Divine Righteousness (12:1-15:13)
 - 1. Call to consecration (12:1-2)
 - 2. The use of gifts (12:3-8)
 - 3. Believers' relations with other believers (12:9-21)
 - 4. Relations with the State (13:1-7)
 - 5. Relations with neighbors (13:8-10)
 - 6. Relations with our Lord (13:11-14)
 - 7. Relations with fellow church members (14:1-12)
 - 8. Our effect on others (12:13-23)
 - 9. Relations in Christlikeness (15:1-13)

- F. Conclusion (15:14-33)
 - 1. Paul's personal plans (15:14-29)
 - 2. Requests for prayer (15:30-33)

- G. Postscript (16:1-27)
 - 1. Greetings (16:1-24)
 - 2. Benediction (16:25-27)

READING CYCLE ONE (see p. viii)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

READING CYCLE TWO (see p. viii)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

ROMANS 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation	Greetings Salutations	Salutation	Salutation	Address
1:1-7	1:1-7	1:1-6	1:1 1:2-6	1:1-2 1:3-7
		1:7a 1:7b	1:7a 1:7b	
Paul's Desire to Visit Rome	Desire to Visit Rome	Thanksgiving	Prayer of Thanksgiving	Thanksgiving and Prayer
1:8-15	1:8-15	1:8-15	1:8-12 1:13-15	1:8-15
The Power of the Gospel	The Just Live By Faith	The Theme of the Letter	The Power of the Gospel	The Theme Stated
1:16-17	1:16-17	1:16-17	1:16-17	1:16-17
The Guilt of Mankind	God's Wrath on Unrighteousness	God's Judgment Upon Sin	The Guilt of Mankind	God's Retribution Against the Gentiles
1:18-23	1:18-32	1:18-23	1:18-23	1:18-23
1:24-32		1:24-25 1:26-27 1:28-32	1:24-25 1:26-27 1:28-32	1:24-25 1:26-27 1:28-32

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key in understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized chapter one. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when one understands the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Verses 1-7 form the introduction to the letter. It is the longest introduction of any of Paul's letters. He was trying to introduce himself and his theology to a church who did not know him personally and may have heard negative information about him.
- B. Verses 8-12 are an opening prayer of thanksgiving. This was characteristic of Greek letters generally and of Paul's writings specifically.
- C. Verses 16-17 state the theme of the book.
- D. Verse 18 through 3:20 form the first literary unit and the first point of Paul's gospel; all humans (3 groups) are lost and need to be saved (cf. Genesis 3).
 1. immoral pagans
 2. moral pagans
 3. Jews
- E. Romans 1:18-3:20 reflects Genesis 3 (surprisingly the rabbis do not focus on this text, but Genesis 6, as the origin of sin). Humanity was created for fellowship with God, in His very image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). However, mankind chose enlightenment and the promise of power and independence. In effect, humans exchanged the exaltation of God for the exaltation of themselves (atheistic humanism)!

God allowed this crisis. To be in God's image is to be responsible, to be morally accountable, to be volitionally free with consequences. God separates humans by both His choice and theirs (a covenant relationship)! He allows them to choose self with all its consequences. God is grieved (cf. Gen. 6:5-7), but humans are free moral agents with all the rights and responsibilities that brings. The repeated phrase "God gave them over" (cf. 1:24,26,28) is the recognition of that freedom, not a willful rejection by God. This was not God's choice. This is not the world that God intended (cf. Gen. 3:22; 6:5-7,11-13)!
- F. The theological summary of 1:18-3:20 is found in 3:21-31. This is the first theological point of the "good news" of the gospel—all humans have sinned and have need of God's forgiveness. God graciously provides a way back to intimate fellowship (i.e., Eden experience, compare Genesis 1-2 with Revelation 21-22).
- G. In this first literary unit of Paul's presentation of the gospel it is interesting to note that fallen mankind is held responsible for their rebellion and sin without any reference to Satan or the demonic (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20). This section certainly reflects the theology of Genesis 3, but without a personal tempter. God will not allow fallen mankind to blame Satan again (cf. Gen. 3:13) or God Himself (cf. Gen. 3:12). Humans are made in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26; 5:1,3; 9:6). They have the right, power and obligation to choose. They are responsible for their choices both corporately in Adam and individually in personal sin (cf. 3:23).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-6

¹Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about *the* obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, ⁶among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

1:1 “Paul” Most Jews of Paul’s day had two first names, one Jewish, one Roman (cf. Acts 13:9). Paul’s Jewish name was Saul. He, like the ancient King of Israel, was of the tribe of Benjamin (cf. Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5). His Roman name in Greek form, Paul (Paulos), meant “little.” This referred to

1. his physical stature which was alluded to in a second century non-canonical book, *The Acts of Paul*, in a chapter about Thessalonica called “Paul and Thekla”
2. his personal sense of being least of the saints because he originally persecuted the Church (cf. I Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; I Tim. 1:15)
3. simply the name given by his parents at birth

Option #3 seems best.

▣ **“a bond-servant”** NKJV, NRSV, TEV and JB translations read “servant.” This concept was either

1. antithetical to Jesus as Lord
2. an OT honorific title (cf. Moses in Num. 12:7 and Josh. 1:1; Joshua in Josh. 24:29; and David in the Psalms (title), and Isaiah 42:1, 19; 52:13)

▣

NASB, TEV,

NJB, REB “Christ Jesus”

NKJV, NRSV “Jesus Christ”

“Christ Jesus” is more unusual and, therefore, probably original (cf. MSS P¹⁰, B). The UBS⁴ gives it a “B” rating (almost certain).

However, the other form has really good attestation (cf. MSS P²⁶, **ℵ**, A, D, G, and most early church Fathers).

See Appendix Two on the assumptions of Textual Criticism. Most of the textual variants are like this one in the sense that they do not affect the basic meaning of the Greek text.

▣ **“called as an apostle”** This was God’s choice, not his (cf. Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:15; Eph. 3:7). With this phrase Paul is asserting his spiritual qualifications and authority, as he does in I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; I Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1) to this church he had never met. See Special Topic: Called at 1:6.

The Koine term “apostle” in Palestinian Jewish circles of the first century meant “one sent as an official representative” (cf. II Chr. 17:7-9). In the NT this term was used in two senses: (1) of the Twelve special disciples and Paul and (2) of a spiritual gift that continues in the church (cf. I Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SEND (*APOSTELLŌ*)

This is a common Greek word for “send” (i.e., *apostellō*) This term has several theological usages:

1. the rabbis used it as one called and sent as an official representative of another, something like our English “ambassador” (cf. II Cor. 5:20)
2. the Gospels often use this term of Jesus being sent by the Father. In John the term takes on Messianic overtones (cf. Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48 and especially John 4:34; 5:24,30,36,37,38; 6:29,38,39,40,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,8,18,21,23,25; 20:21). It is used of Jesus sending believers (cf. John 17:18; 20:21)
3. the NT used it for disciples
 - a. the original twelve inner circle of disciples (cf. Luke 6:13; Acts 1:21-22)
 - b. a special group of Apostolic helpers and co-workers
 - (1) Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4,14)
 - (2) Andronicus and Junias (KJV, Junia, cf. Rom. 16:7)
 - (3) Apollos (cf. I Cor. 4:6-9)
 - (4) James the Lord’s brother (cf. Gal. 1:19)
 - (5) Silvanus and Timothy (cf. I Thess. 2:6)
 - (6) possibly Titus (cf. II Cor. 8:23)
 - (7) possibly Epaphroditus (cf. Phil. 2:25)
 - c. an ongoing gift in the church (cf. I Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11)
4. Paul uses this title for himself in most of his letters as a way of asserting his God-given authority as Christ’s representative (cf. Rom. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; I Tim. 1:1; II Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1).

▣ **“set apart”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which implied that he was set apart by God in the past (cf. Jer. 1:5 and Gal. 1:15) and this continued as a state of being. This was a possible play on the Aramaic word for “Pharisee.” They were separated to Jewish legalism (and Paul also [Phil. 3:5] before his Damascus Road encounter with Jesus), but now he was separated to the gospel.

It is related to the Hebrew word for “holy” (BDB 872), which meant “set apart for God’s use” (cf. Exod. 19:6; I Pet. 2:5). The terms “saint,” “sanctify,” and “set apart” all had the same Greek root, “holy” (*hagios*).

▣ **“for the gospel of God”** The PREPOSITION *eis* in this context (and v. 5) shows the purpose of Paul’s “call” (v. 1b) and being “set apart” (v. 1c).

Gospel is a compound word from “good” (*eu*) and “message” (*angellos*). It became the term that described the doctrines revealed in the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-32) related to God’s promised Messiah (cf. vv. 3-4). It is the “gospel of His Son” (v. 2).

This is God’s gospel, not Paul’s (cf. 15:16; Mark 1:14; II Cor. 11:7; I Thess. 2:2,8,9; I Pet. 4:17). Paul was not an innovator or cultural adapter, but a proclaimer of the truth he received (cf. Acts 9; I Cor. 1:18-25).

1:2 “He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures” This VERB is an AORIST MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE. It is used only in Paul’s writings (here and II Cor. 9:5). The gospel was no afterthought with God, but His eternal, purposeful plan (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5; Isa. 53; Ps. 118; Mark 10:45; Luke. 2:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; Titus 1:2). The early sermons in Acts (the *kerygma*) present Jesus as the fulfillment of OT promises and prophecies.

The OT is referred to in the NT in two common ways.

1. “it is written” (or “writings,” i.e., II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 3:16)
2. Scripture(s)

It is also referred to in connection with the prophets. In the Jewish mind prophets wrote Scripture.

1. “the Law or the Prophets,” Matt. 5:17-18; also note Luke 24:44
2. “prophecy,” Luke 24:27
3. “writings of the prophets,” Matt. 26:56
4. “prophetic writings,” Rom. 16:26 (Rom. 1:2 also mentions “prophets”)
5. “prophecy of Scripture,” II Pet. 1:20

There are two instances of the ADJECTIVE “holy” attached.

1. “holy Scriptures” (full clause also mentions “prophets”), Rom. 1:2
2. “sacred writings,” II Tim. 3:15

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE *KERYGMA* OF THE EARLY CHURCH

- A. The promises by God made in the Old Testament have now been fulfilled with the coming of Jesus the Messiah (Acts 2:30; 3:19,24; 10:43; 26:6-7,22; Rom. 1:2-4; I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1-2; I Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:18-19).
- B. Jesus was anointed as Messiah by God at His baptism (Acts 10:38).
- C. Jesus began His ministry in Galilee after His baptism (Acts 10:37).
- D. His ministry was characterized by doing good and performing mighty works by means of the power of God (Mark 10:45; Acts 2:22; 10:38).
- E. The Messiah was crucified according to the eternal purpose of God (Mark 10:45; John 3:16; Acts 2:23; 3:13-15,18; 4:11; 10:39; 26:23; Rom. 8:34; I Cor. 1:17-18; 15:3; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 1:3; I Peter 1:2,19; 3:18; I John 4:10).
- F. He was raised from the dead and appeared to His disciples (Acts 2:24,31-32; 3:15,26; 10:40-41; 17:31; 26:23; Rom. 8:34; 10:9; I Cor. 15:4-7,12ff; I Thess. 1:10; I Tim. 3:16; I Peter 1:2; 3:18,21).
- G. Jesus was exalted by God and given the name “Lord” (Acts 2:25-29,33-36; 3:13; 10:36; Rom. 8:34; 10:9; I Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:3; I Peter 3:22).
- H. He gave the Holy Spirit to form the new community of God (Acts 1:8; 2:14-18,38-39; 10:44-47; I Peter 1:12).
- I. He will come again for judgment and the restoration of all things (Acts 3:20-21; 10:42; 17:31; I Cor. 15:20-28; I Thess. 1:10).
- J. All who hear the message should repent and be baptized (Acts 2:21,38; 3:19; 10:43,47-48; 17:30; 26:20; Rom. 1:17; 10:9; I Peter 3:21).

This schema served as the essential proclamation of the early church, though different authors of the New Testament may leave out a portion or emphasize other particulars in their preaching. The entire Gospel of Mark closely follows the Petrine aspect of the *kerygma*. Mark is traditionally seen as structuring Peter’s sermons, preached in Rome, into a written Gospel. Both Matthew and Luke follow Mark’s basic structure.

1:3 “concerning His Son” The central message of the Good News is a person, Jesus of Nazareth, virgin-born son of Mary. In the OT the nation, the king, and the Messiah were called “son” (cf. II Sam. 7:14; Hos. 11:1; Ps. 2:7; Matt. 2:15).

In the OT God spoke through servants and prophets. Jesus was not a servant of God. He was a family member (cf. Heb.1:1-2; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28). Surprisingly this is the only place in the book where Paul focuses on Christology. Romans is not a complete systematic theology.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF GOD

This is one of the major NT titles for Jesus. It surely has divine connotations. It included Jesus as “the Son” or “My Son” and God addressed as “Father.” It occurs in the NT over 124 times. Even Jesus’ self-designation as “Son of Man” has a divine connotation from Dan. 7:13-14.

In the OT the designation “son” could refer to four specific groups.

1. angels (usually in the PLURAL, cf. Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1)
2. the King of Israel (cf. II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 89:26-27)
3. the nation of Israel as a whole (cf. Exod. 4:22-23; Deut. 14:1; Hos. 11:1; Mal. 2:10)
4. Israeli judges (cf. Ps. 82:6)

It is the second usage that is linked to Jesus. In this way “son of David” and “son of God” both relate to II Samuel 7; Psalm 2 and 89. In the OT “son of God” is never used specifically of the Messiah, except as the eschatological king as one of the “anointed offices” of Israel. However, in the Dead Sea Scrolls the title with Messianic implications is common (see specific references in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p. 770). Also “Son of God” is a Messianic title in two interbiblical Jewish apocalyptic works (cf. II Esdras 7:28; 13:32,37,52; 14:9 and I Enoch 105:2).

Its NT background as it refers to Jesus is best summarized by several categories.

1. His pre-existence (cf. John 1:1-18)
2. His unique (virgin) birth (cf. Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:31-35)
3. His baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22. God’s voice from heaven unites the royal king of Psalm 2 with the suffering servant of Isaiah 53).
4. His satanic temptation (cf. Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12,13; Luke 4:1-13. He is tempted to doubt His sonship or at least to accomplish its purpose by different means than the cross).
5. His affirmation by unacceptable confessors
 - a. demons (cf. Mark 1:23-25; Luke 4:31-37,41; Mark 3:11-12; 5:7)
 - b. unbelievers (cf. Matt. 27:43; Mark 14:61; John 19:7)
6. His affirmation by His disciples
 - a. Matt. 14:33; 16:16
 - b. John 1:34,49; 6:69; 11:27
7. His self affirmation
 - a. Matthew 11:25-27
 - b. John 10:36
8. His use of the familial metaphor of God as Father
 - a. His use of “abba” for God
 - 1) Mark 14:36
 - 2) Romans 8:15
 - 3) Galatians 4:6
 - b. His recurrent use of Father (*patēr*) to describe His relationship to deity

In summary, the title “Son of God” had great theological meaning for those who knew the OT and its promises and categories, but the NT writers were nervous about its use with Gentiles because of their pagan background of “the gods” taking women with the resulting offspring being “the titans” or “giants.”

▣ **“who was born a descendant of David”** This relates to the prophecy of II Samuel 7. The Messiah was of the royal line of David (cf. Isa. 9:7; 11:1,10; Jer. 23:5; 30:9; 33:15) from the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:4-12; Isa. 65:9). In Matthew’s Gospel Jesus is acknowledged as David’s descendant several times (cf. 1:6; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30,31; 21:9,15; 22:42), which reflected the Jewish hope of a coming Davidic savior.

It is surprising that Paul did not emphasize this aspect of Jesus. He mentioned it only here and in II Tim. 2:8; both passages may have been quotes from an early church’s creedal formula. The NIDNTT, vol. 3, p. 61, lists several NT Scripture texts which may reflect early Christological creeds/hymns/liturgy (i.e., Rom. 1:3-4; 8:34; I Cor. 15:3-4; Phil. 2:6-11; I Tim. 3:16; II Tim. 2:8; I Pet. 3:18-20).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “according to the flesh”

TEV “as to his humanity”

NJB “according to human nature”

This was fulfillment of prophecy and an affirmation of Jesus’ humanity, which was often denied in the eclectic religious world of the first century (cf. I John 1:1-4; 4:1-3). This verse clearly shows that Paul did not always use the term “flesh” (*sarx*) in a negative sense (cf. 2:28; 9:3). However, usually Paul used “flesh” to contrast “spirit” (cf. 6:19; 7:5,18,25; 8:3-9,12,13; I Cor. 5:5; II Cor. 1:17; 11:18; Gal. 3:3; 5:13,16,17-19,24; 6:8; Eph. 2:3; Col. 2:11,13,18,23).

This grammatical construction *kata* (according to) plus an ACCUSATIVE is paralleled in v. 4. Jesus is both human (according to the flesh, v. 3) and divine (according to the Spirit, v. 4). This doctrine of incarnation is crucial (cf. I John 4:1-3). It may also be the implication of Jesus’ self-chosen designation, “Son of Man” (cf. Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1 [human] and Dan. 7:13 [divine]).

SPECIAL TOPIC: FLESH (*sarx*)

This term is used most often by Paul in Galatians and its theological development in Romans. Scholars differ on how to characterize the different connotations of the term. There is surely some overlap in meanings. The following is merely an attempt to note the wide semantic field of the term.

- A. the human body, John 1:14; Rom. 2:28; I Cor. 5:5; 7:28; II Cor. 4:11; 7:5; 12:7; Gal. 1:16; 2:16,20; 4:13; Phil. 1:22; Col. 1:22,24; 2:5; I Tim. 3:16
- B. human descent, John 3:6; Rom. 1:3; 4:1; 9:3,5,8; 11:14; I Cor. 10:18; Gal. 4:23,29
- C. the human person, Rom. 3:20; 7:5; 8:7-8; I Cor. 1:29; II Cor. 10:3; Gal. 2:16; 5:24
- D. humanly speaking, John 8:15; I Cor. 1:26; II Cor. 1:12; 5:16; 10:2; Gal. 6:12
- E. human weakness, Rom. 6:19; 7:18; 8:5-6,9; II Cor. 10:4; Gal. 3:3; 5:13,16,19-21; Col. 2:18
- F. hostility of humans toward God, related to the consequences of the Fall, Rom. 7:14; 13:14; I Cor. 3:1,3; Eph. 2:3; Col. 2:18; I Pet. 2:11; I John 2:16

1:4

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NIV “declared”

TEV “shown”

NJB, RSV “designated”

NET “appointed”

REB “proclaimed”

This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. God definitively appointed Jesus “the Son of God.” This does not imply that Bethlehem was the beginning of Jesus or that He is inferior to the Father. See Special Topic: The Trinity at 8:11. See third paragraph below.

▣ **“to be the Son of God with power”** The NT authors did not often refer to Jesus by the title “Son of God” (cf. Matt. 4:3) because of the false implications from Greek mythology (the same is true of the virgin birth). The concept is usually qualified by “unique, one of a kind” (*monogenes*, cf. John 1:18; 3:16,18; I John 4:9). Thus the meaning is “Jesus, the only true Son of God.” See Special Topic at 1:3.

The NT has two theological poles related to God the Father and Jesus the Son.

1. they are equal (cf. John 1:1; 5:18; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28; II Cor. 4:4; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3)
but 2. they are separate personalities (cf. Mark 10:18; 14:36; 15:34)

It is possible that Paul was quoting an early Christological creed or alluding to YHWH’s Messianic King in Ps. 2:6,7 or 110:1 (cf. Acts 2:34-36). In so doing he was emphasizing the whole phrase “the Son of God with power” (NIDNTT, vol. 2, p. 79) which focused, not on His birth or baptism, but His ascension. However, Adoptionist Christologies (see Glossary) took the verse and quoted it for their own reasons. With this proof-texting method of Bible interpretation, one can make the Bible say anything (see my seminar on Biblical Interpretation free online at www.freebiblecommentary.org).

▣ **“by the resurrection”** God the Father affirmed Jesus’ life and message by raising Him from the dead (cf. 4:24; 6:4,9; 8:11; Acts 2:31-33). The deity (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-19; Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 1:2-3) and resurrection of Jesus (cf. 4:25; 10:9-13; I Corinthians 15) are twin pillars of Christianity.

▣ This verse was often used to advocate the heresy of “adoptionism” which asserted that Jesus was rewarded and elevated by God for His exemplary life of obedience. The heretics asserted that He was not always (ontologically) deity, but became deity when God raised Him from the dead. Although this is clearly untrue, which is obvious from many texts such as John 1 and 17, something wonderful was conferred on Jesus at His resurrection. It is difficult to express how deity can be rewarded, yet that is what happened. Even though Jesus shared eternal glory with the Father, His status was somehow enriched by the perfect fulfillment of His assigned redemptive task. The resurrection was the Father’s affirmation of the life, example, teachings, and sacrificial death of Jesus of Nazareth; eternally divine, fully human, perfect savior, restored and rewarded, unique Son! See Appendix three - Adoptionism.

▣

NASB, NKJV “according to the Spirit of holiness”

NKJV “according to the spirit of holiness”

TEV “as to his divine holiness”

NJB “in the order of the spirit, the spirit of holiness”

Some translations capitalize the “S” in Spirit, implying the Holy Spirit, while the lowercase “s” would refer to the human spirit of Jesus. As God the Father is Spirit, so too, is Jesus. The ancient Hebrew and Greek texts had no capitalizations, no punctuation, and no chapter or verse divisions, so these are all points of tradition or the interpretation by translators.

There are three ways to view verses 3 and 4.

1. as a reference to Jesus' two natures, human and divine
2. as a reference to two stages in His earthly life, human and resurrected Lord
3. as a parallel to "Jesus Christ our Lord"

▣ **"Jesus"** The Aramaic name *Jesus* is the same as the Hebrew name *Joshua*. It was a compound of two Hebrew words "YHWH" and "salvation." It can mean "YHWH saves," "YHWH delivers" or "YHWH is salvation." The thrust of the meaning can be seen in Matt. 1:21,25.

▣ **"Christ"** This was the Greek translation of the Hebrew term *messiah* (BDB 603), which meant "an anointed one." In the OT several groups of leaders (prophets, priests, and kings) were anointed as a sign of God's choice and equipping. Jesus fulfilled all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3).

The OT predicted that God would send a special "anointed one" to usher in the New Age of Righteousness. Jesus was His special "servant," "son," and "Messiah."

SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH

This is taken from my commentary note at Daniel 9:6. The difficulty in interpreting this verse is because of the possible meanings associated with the term Messiah or anointed one (BDB 603).

1. used of Jewish kings (e.g., I Sam. 2:10; 12:3)
2. used of Jewish priests (e.g., Lev. 4:3,5)
3. used of Cyrus (cf. Isa. 45:1)
4. #1 and #2 are combined in Psalm 110 and Zechariah 4
5. used of God's special coming, Davidic King to bring in the new age of righteousness
 - a. line of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10)
 - b. house of Jesse (cf. II Samuel 7)
 - c. universal reign (cf. Psalm 2; Isa. 9:6; 11:1-5; Mic. 5:1-4ff)

I personally am attracted to the identification of "an anointed one" with Jesus of Nazareth because of

1. the introduction of an eternal Kingdom in chapter 2 during the fourth empire
2. the introduction of "a son of man" in 7:13 being given an eternal kingdom
3. the redemptive clauses of 9:24, which point toward a culmination of fallen world history
4. Jesus' use of the book of Daniel in the NT (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14)

▣ **"Lord"** In Judaism the Covenant name for God, YHWH, became so holy that the rabbis substituted the title "Lord," (*Adon*) when reading the Scriptures because they were afraid they might take God's name in vain (cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11) and thereby break one of the Ten Commandments. When NT authors called Jesus "Lord" ("Kurios") in theological contexts, they were affirming His deity (cf. Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9-13; Phil. 2:6-11).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

A. *El* (BDB 42, KB 48)

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, "to be strong" or "to be powerful" (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).

2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts)
 3. In the Bible *El* is not usually compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
 - a. *El-Elyon* (God Most High, BDB 42 & 751 II), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
 - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself,” BDB 42 & 909), Gen. 16:13
 - c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God the All Compassion” or “God of the mountain,” BDB 42 & 994), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
 - d. *El-Olam* (the Everlasting God, BDB 42 & 761), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
 - e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant,” BDB 42 & 136), Jdgs. 9:46
 4. *El* is equated with
 - a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
 - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father”
 - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
 - d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
 - e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31;
 - f. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
 - g. “knowledge” in I Sam. 2:3
 - h. “my strong refuge” in II Sam. 22:33
 - i. “my avenger” in II Sam. 22:48
 - j. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
 - k. “might” in Isa. 10:21
 - l. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2
 - m. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18
 - n. “retribution” in Jer. 51:56
 5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El*, *Elohim*, *YHWH*, repeated)
- B. *Elyon* (BDB 751, KB 832)
1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
 2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
 - a. *Elohim* – Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
 - b. *YHWH* – Gen. 14:22; II am. 22:14
 - c. *El-Shaddai* – Ps. 91:1,9
 - d. *El* – Num. 24:16
 - e. *Elah* – used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
 3. It is often used by non-Israelites.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
 - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8

d. Luke's Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)

C. *Elohim* (PLURAL), *Eloah* (SINGULAR), used primarily in poetry (BDB 43, KB 52)

1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 12:12; 20:3). Abraham's family were polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
3. It can refer to Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).
4. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7.
5. In the Bible it is the first title/name for Deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Ps. 104).

It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as Psalm 14 (*Elohim*) is exactly like Psalm 53 (YHWH), except for the change in divine names.

6. Although PLURAL and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
7. This term is found in the mouths of non-Israelites as the name for deity.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:2
 - c. Moses, when speaking of the nations, Deut. 32:8
8. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is PLURAL! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
 - a. Hebrew has many PLURALS, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called "the plural of majesty," where the PLURAL is used to magnify a concept.
 - b. This may refer to the angelic council, whom God meets with in heaven and who does His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
 - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods, and from the NT Jesus is God the Father's agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).

D. YHWH (BDB 217, KB 394)

1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant-making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Psalm 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4-3:24 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.

2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said "*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD" (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies

(cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).

- a. from an Arabic root, “to show fervent love”
 - b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
 - c. from a Ugartic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
 - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”
 - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)
 - f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
 - g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:20), meaning “the ever-living, only-living One”
 - h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67). The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form.
 - (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah, BDB 219, cf. Exod. 15:2; 17:16; Ps. 89:9; 104:35)
 - (2) *Yahu* (“iah” ending of names, e.g., Isaiah)
 - (3) *Yo* (“Jo” beginning of names, e.g., Joshua or Joel)
3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
4. As with *El*, YHWH is often combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combination terms, here are some.
- a. *YHWH – Yireh* (YHWH will provide, BDB 217 & 906), Gen. 22:14
 - b. *YHWH – Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer, BDB 217 & 950, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 15:26
 - c. *YHWH – Nissi* (YHWH is my banner, BDB 217 & 651), Exod. 17:15
 - d. *YHWH – Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you, BDB 217 & 872, *Piel* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 31:13
 - e. *YHWH – Shalom* (YHWH is Peace, BDB 217 & 1022), Jdgs. 6:24
 - f. *YHWH – Sabaoth* (YHWH of hosts, BDB 217 & 878), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets
 - g. *YHWH – Ro ‘I* (YHWH is my shepherd, BDB 217 & 944, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Ps. 23:1
 - h. *YHWH – Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness, BDB 217 & 841), Jer. 23:6
 - i. *YHWH – Shammah* (YHWH is there, BDB 217 & 1027), Ezek. 48:35

1:5 “we” Paul mentions no other person in his introduction, as he often does in his other letters. This first phrase refers to Paul’s Damascus Road conversion and appointment (cf. Acts 9), which strongly implies the editorial use of “we.”

▣ **“we have received grace and apostleship”** Paul is affirming not only the gift of salvation through Christ, but also and connected to it, the call to be the apostle to the Gentiles. All of this occurred instantaneously on the road to Damascus (AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE, cf. Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:9-18). It was not from merit, but purposeful grace!

It is possible that “grace” and “apostleship” are to be taken as one unit, “the gift of apostleship” (NET note #13). All of the various translations listed in *The New Testament in 26 Translations* (p. 646) see it as a hendiadys also.

▣ **“to bring about”** This is a second use of *eis* in a purpose context (cf. v. 1). The gospel restores the image of God in mankind through faith in Jesus. This allows the original purpose of God to be manifested, which is a people in intimate fellowship with Him who reflect His character (cf. v. 7).

▣

NASB, NJB **“the obedience of faith”**
NKJV **“for obedience to the faith”**
NRSV **“to bring about the obedience of faith”**
TEV **“to believe and obey”**

This is the first usage of the pivotal term, “faith,” in Romans (see Special Topic at 4:5). It was used in three distinct ways in this chapter and book.

1. Verse 5. It is used of a body of truths or doctrines related to Jesus and the Christian life (cf. Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; 16:5; Rom. 14:1; 16:26; Gal. 1:23; 6:10; Jude 3, 20).
2. Verse 8. It is used in the sense of personal trust in Jesus. The English terms “believe,” “faith,” and “trust” all translate one Greek term (*pistis/pisteuo*). The gospel is both conceptual (doctrine) and personal (cf. v.16; John 1:12; 3:16). See Special Topic at 4:5.
3. Verse 17. It is used in its OT sense of trustworthiness, loyalty, or dependability. This is the meaning of Hab. 2:4. In the OT there was not a developed doctrine of faith, but example after example of lives of faith (cf. Abraham in Gen. 15:6), not perfect faith but struggling faith (cf. Hebrews 11). The hope of mankind is not in their ability to perform or believe correctly, but in God’s character (cf. 3:24; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9). Only God is faithful (cf. Mal. 3:6)!

There is a series of acts that can be called the salvation event.

- a. repentance (cf. 2:4; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3,5; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21)
- b. belief/faith (cf. 1:16; John 1:12; 3:16; Acts 16:31, baptism is the public declaration of one’s faith)
- c. obedience (cf. 2:13; II Cor. 9:13; 10:5; I Pet. 1:2,22)
- d. perseverance (cf. 2:7; Luke. 18:1; II Cor. 4:1,16; Gal. 6:9; II Thess. 3:13)

These are the conditions of the New Covenant. We must receive/believe and continue to receive/believe God’s offer in Christ (cf. v. 16; John 1:12).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (אמא)

I. Opening Statement

It needs to be stated that the use of this theological concept, so crucial to the NT, is not as clearly defined in the OT. It is surely there, but demonstrated in key selected passages and persons.

The OT blends

- A. the individual and the community
- B. the personal encounter and covenant obedience

Faith is both personal encounter and daily lifestyle! It is easier to describe in a person than in a lexical form (i.e., word study). This personal aspect is best illustrated in

- A. Abraham and his seed
- B. David and Israel

These men met/encountered God and their lives were permanently changed (not perfect lives, but continuing faith). Testing revealed weaknesses and strengths of their faith encounter with God, but the intimate, trusting relationship continued through time! It was tested and refined, but it continued as evidenced by their devotion and lifestyle.

II. Main root used

A. אָמַן (BDB 52)

1. VERB

- a. *Qal* stem – to support, to nourish (i.e., II Kgs. 10:1,5; Esther 2:7, the non-theological usage)
 - b. *Niphal* stem – to make sure or firm, to establish, to confirm, to be faithful or trustworthy
 - (1) of men, Isa. 8:2; 53:1; Jer. 40:14
 - (2) of things, Isa. 22:23
 - (3) of God, Deut. 7:9,12; Isa. 49:7; Jer. 42:5
 - c. *Hiphil* stem – to stand firm, to believe, to trust
 - (1) Abraham believed God, Gen. 15:6
 - (2) the Israelites in Egypt believed, Exod. 4:31; 14:31 (negated in Deut. 1:32)
 - (3) Israelites believed YHWH spoke through Moses, Exod. 19:9; Ps. 106:12,24
 - (4) Ahaz did not trust in God, Isa 7:9
 - (5) whoever believes in it/him, Isa. 28:16
 - (6) believe truths about God, Isa. 43:10-12
2. NOUN (MASCULINE) – faithfulness (i.e., Deut. 32:20; Isa. 25:1; 26:2)
3. ADVERB – truly, verily, I agree, may it be so (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; I Kgs. 1:36; I Chr. 16:36; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 11:5; 28:6). This is the liturgical use of “amen” in the OT and NT.

B. אֱמֻנָה (BDB 54) FEMININE NOUN, firmness, faithfulness, truth

- 1. of men, Isa. 10:20; 42:3; 48:1
- 2. of God, Exod. 34:6; Ps. 117:2; Isa. 38:18,19; 61:8
- 3. of truth, Deut. 32:4; I Kgs. 22:16; Ps. 33:4; 98:3; 100:5; 119:30; Jer. 9:4; Zech. 8:16

C. אֱמוּנָה (BDB 53), firmness, steadfastness, fidelity

- 1. of hands, Exod. 17:12
- 2. of times, Isa. 33:6
- 3. of humans, Jer. 5:3; 7:28; 9:2
- 4. of God, Ps. 40:11; 88:12; 89:2,3,6,9; 119:138

III. Paul’s use of this OT concept

- A. Paul bases his new understanding of YHWH and the OT on his personal encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9; 22; 26).

- B. He found OT support for his new understanding in two key OT passages which use the root יָדַן.
 1. Gen. 15:6 – Abram’s personal encounter initiated by God (Genesis 12) resulted in an obedient life of faith (Genesis 12-22). Paul alludes to this in Romans 4 and Galatians 3.
 2. Isa. 28:16 – those who believe in it (i.e., God’s tested and firmly placed cornerstone) will never be
 - a. Rom. 9:33, “put to shame” or “be disappointed”
 - b. Rom. 10:11, same as above
 3. Hab. 2:4 – those who know the faithful God should live faithful lives (cf. Jer. 7:28). Paul uses this text in Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11 (also note Heb. 10:38).

IV. Peter’s use of the OT concept

- A. Peter combines
 1. Isa. 8:14 – I Pet. 2:8 (stumbling block)
 2. Isa. 28:16 – I Pet. 2:6 (cornerstone)
 3. Ps. 111:22 – I Pet 2:7 (rejected stone)
- B. He turns the unique language that describes Israel, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” from
 1. Deut. 10:15; Isa. 43:21
 2. Isa. 61:6; 66:21
 3. Exod. 19:6; Deut. 7:6
 and now uses it for the church’s faith in Christ

V. John’s use of the concept

A. Its NT usage

The term “believed” is from the Greek term (*pisteuō*). which can also be translated “believe,” “faith,” or “trust.” For example, the NOUN does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the VERB is used often. In John 2:23-25 there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd’s commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term “believe” are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22,31-32).

B. Its use with PREPOSITIONS

1. *eis* means “into.” This unique construction emphasizes believers putting their trust/faith in Jesus
 - a. into His name (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; I John 5:13)
 - b. into Him (John 2:11; 3:15,18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5,31,39,48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45, 48; 17:37,42; Matt. 18:6; Acts 10:43; Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 1:8)
 - c. into Me (John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25,26; 12:44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20)
 - d. into the Son (John 3:36; 9:35; I John 5:10)
 - e. into Jesus (John 12:11; Acts 19:4; Gal. 2:16)
 - f. into Light (John 12:36)
 - g. into God (John 14:1)
2. *en* means “in” as in John 3:15; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:14
3. *epi* means “in” or “upon,” as in Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; 16:31; 22:19; Rom. 4:5, 24; 9:33; 10:11; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 2:6

4. the DATIVE CASE with no PREPOSITION as in Gal. 3:6; Acts 18:8; 27:25; I John 3:23; 5:10
5. *hoti*, which means “believe that,” gives content as to what to believe
 - a. Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69)
 - b. Jesus is the I Am (John 8:24)
 - c. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38)
 - d. Jesus is the Messiah (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - e. Jesus is the Son of God (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - f. Jesus was sent by the Father (John 11:42; 17:8,21)
 - g. Jesus is one with the Father (John 14:10-11)
 - h. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:27,30)
 - i. Jesus identified Himself in the covenant name of the Father, “I Am” (John 8:24; 13:19)
 - j. We will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)
 - k. Jesus died and rose again (I Thess. 4:14)

VI. Conclusion

Biblical faith is the human response to a Divine word/promise. God always initiates (i.e., John 6:44,65), but part of this Divine communication is the need for humans to respond.

- A. trust
- B. covenant obedience

Biblical faith is

1. a personal relationship (initial faith)
2. an affirmation of biblical truth (faith in God’s revelation)
3. an appropriate obedient response to it (daily faith)

Biblical faith is not a ticket to heaven or an insurance policy. It is a personal relationship. This is the purpose of creation and humans being made in the image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) of God. The issue is “intimacy.” God desires fellowship, not a certain theological standing! But fellowship with a holy God demands that the children demonstrate the “family” characteristic (i.e., holiness, cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:15-16). The Fall (cf. Genesis 3) affected our ability to respond appropriately. Therefore, God acted on our behalf (cf. Ezek. 36:27-38), giving us a “new heart” and “new spirit,” which enables us through faith and repentance to fellowship with Him and obey Him!

All three are crucial. All three must be maintained. The goal is to know God (both Hebrew and Greek senses) and to reflect His character in our lives. The goal of faith is not heaven someday, but Christlikeness every day!

Human faithfulness is the result (NT), not the basis (OT) for a relationship with God: human’s faith in His faithfulness; human’s trust in His trustworthiness. The heart of the NT view of salvation is that humans must respond initially and continually to the initiating grace and mercy of God, demonstrated in Christ. He has loved, He has sent, He has provided; we must respond in faith and faithfulness (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 and 10)!

The faithful God wants a faithful people to reveal Himself to a faithless world and bring them to personal faith in Him.



NASB “for His name’s sake”
NKJV “for His name”
NRSV “for the sake of his name”
TEV “for the sake of Christ”
NJB “for the honor of his name”

See Special Topic at 10:9.



“*the obedience of faith*” The literal Greek phrase is “for (*eis*) obedience.” The gospel has an

1. immediate obedience of repentance and faith
2. lifestyle obedience of Christlikeness and perseverance

The gospel is a grace gift but with expected results! The NT is a covenant like the OT. Both demand a faith/obedience response. They both have benefits, responsibilities, and expectations (i.e., Eph. 1:4; 2:10). This is not a works righteousness but a works confirmation (cf. James, I John)! Eternal life has observable characteristics!



NASB, NRSV “among all the Gentiles”
NKJV “among all nations”
TEV “people of all nations”
NJB “to all pagan nations”

This is the universal gospel. God’s promise of redemption in Gen. 3:15 included all mankind. Jesus’ substitutionary death included all of the fallen children of Adam (cf. 5:18; John 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 6:33,51; I Cor. 15:22; II Cor. 5:19; Eph. 2:11-3:13; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14). Paul sees his special call as preaching God’s gospel to Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 1:16; 2:29; Eph. 3:2,8; I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 4:17).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOB’S EVANGELICAL BIASES

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but it is Great Commission evangelism (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezekiel 18; 36:22-39; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18,19-20,21-31), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)! The NT gospel, not Israel, is the key to Scripture.

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture. I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

1:6 “you also” Paul was an extreme example (i.e., persecutor of the church) of the grace of God, but his readers were also examples of the undeserved, unmerited grace of God.



NASB, NKJV “the called of Jesus Christ”
NRSV “who are called to belong to Jesus Christ”
TEV “whom God has called to belong to Jesus Christ”
NJB “by his call belong to Jesus Christ”

This may be

1. a play on the term “church,” which meant “the called out ones” or “gathered ones”
2. a reference to divine election (cf. Rom. 8:29-30; 9:1ff; Eph.1:4, 11; 3:21; 4:1,4)
3. the Revised English Bible translation of the phrase, “you who have heard the call and belong to Jesus Christ.”

This also reflects the understanding of this phrase as translated in the NRSV, TEV, and JB. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CALLED

God always takes the initiative in calling, electing, and wooing believers to Himself (cf. John 6:44, 65; 15:16; I Cor. 1:12; Eph. 1:4-5,11). The term “calling” is used in several theological senses.

- A. Sinners are called to salvation by the grace of God through the finished work of Christ and the conviction of the Spirit (i.e., *klētos*, cf. Rom. 1:6-7; 9:24, which is theologically similar to I Cor. 1:1-2 and II Tim. 1:9; II Pet. 1:10).
- B. Sinners call on the name of the Lord to be saved (i.e., *epikaleō*, cf. Acts 2:21; 22:16; Rom. 10:9-13). This statement is a Jewish worship idiom.
- C. Believers are called to live Christlike lives (i.e., *klēsis*, cf. I Cor. 1:26; 7:20; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 3:14; II Thess. 1:11; II Tim. 1:9).
- D. Believers are called to ministry tasks (cf. Acts 13:2; I Cor. 12:4-7; Eph. 4:1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:7

⁷to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called *as* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:7 “beloved of God” This phrase was often used of Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Now it was used of the church in Rome! This shows the depth of God’s love for those who trust in His Son. This kind of transfer can also be seen in Eph. 1:20 (God’s actions on behalf of Jesus) and Eph. 2:5-6 (Jesus’ actions on behalf of believers).

▣ **“in Rome”** Paul did not start this church. No one knows who did (see Intro.). Romans was a letter introducing himself to a church already established. The book of Romans is Paul’s most developed presentation of the gospel he preached. It is least affected by a local situation although there existed tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers to whom he comments throughout the letter (esp. chaps. 9-11).

▣

NASB “called *as* saints”

NKJV, NRSV,

NJB “called to be saints”

TEV “called to be his own people”

The term “saints” referred to the believers’ position in Christ (see Special Topic at 6:4), not their sinlessness. It should also describe their progressive Christlikeness. The term was always PLURAL except in Phil. 4:21. However, even in this context it is corporate. To be a Christian is to be part of a community, a family, a body.

Verse 1 indicates that Paul was called to be an apostle. Believers are “the called of Jesus Christ” in verse 6. Believers are also called “saints” in verse 7. This “calling” was a NT way of asserting the truth of the initiating priority of God (see Special Topic at 1:6). No fallen human ever called himself (cf. 3:9-13;

Isa. 53:6; I Pet. 2:25). God always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44,65; 15:16). He always brings the covenant (see Special Topic at 9:4) to us. This is true of our salvation (our imputed righteousness or legal standing), but also our giftedness for effective service (cf. I Cor. 12:7,11), and our Christian lives. See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS

This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *kadash*, which has the basic meaning of setting some one, some thing, or some place apart for YHWH's exclusive use (BDB 871). It denotes the English concept of "the sacred." YHWH is set apart from humanity by His nature (eternal non-created Spirit) and His character (moral perfection). He is the standard by which all else is measured and judged. He is the transcendent, Holy One, Holy Other.

God created humans for fellowship, but the fall (Genesis 3) caused a relational and moral barrier between a Holy God and sinful humanity. God chose to restore His conscious creation; therefore, He calls on His people to be "holy" (cf. Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7,26; 21:8). By a faith relationship with YHWH His people become holy by their covenantal position in Him, but are also called on to live holy lives (cf. Matt. 5:48).

This holy living is possible because believers are fully accepted and forgiven through Jesus' life and work and the presence of the Holy Spirit in their minds and hearts. This establishes the paradoxical situation of:

1. being holy because of Christ's imputed righteousness
2. called to live holy because of the presence of the Spirit

Believers are "saints" (*hagioi*) because of (1) the will of the Holy One (the Father); (2) the work of the Holy Son (Jesus); and (3) the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The NT always refers to saints as PLURAL (except one time in Phil. 4:21, but even then the context makes it PLURAL). To be saved is to be part of a family, a body, a building! Biblical faith starts with a personal reception, but issues into a corporate fellowship. We are each gifted (cf. I Cor. 12:11) for the health, growth, and well-being of the body of Christ—the church (cf. I Cor. 12:7). We are saved to serve! Holiness is a family characteristic!

▣ **"Grace to you and peace from God"** This is Paul's characteristic opening blessing. It is a word play on the traditional Greek term "greetings" (*charein*) and the uniquely Christian term "grace" (*charis*). Paul may have been combining this Greek opening with the traditional Hebrew greeting *shalom* or "peace." However, this is only speculation. Notice that theologically grace always precedes peace.

▣ **"from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"** Paul regularly uses only one PREPOSITION for both names (cf. I Cor. 1:3; II Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; II Thess. 1:2; I Tim. 1:2; II Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4). This was his way of grammatically linking these two Persons of the Trinity. This would emphasize Jesus' deity and equality with the Father.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHERHOOD OF GOD

I. Old Testament

- A. There is a sense that God is father by means of creation.
 1. Gen. 1:26-27

2. Mal. 2:10

3. Acts 17:28

B. Father is an analogy used in several senses.

1. father of Israel (by election)

a. "Son" – Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:19; 31:20; Hosea 1:10; 11:1; Mal. 1:6

b. "firstborn" – Exod. 4:22; Jer. 31:9

2. father of the king of Israel (Messianic)

a. II Sam. 7:11-16

b. Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5

c. Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15

3. analogy of loving parent

a. father (metaphor)

(1) carries his son – Deut. 1:31

(2) disciplines – Deut. 8:5; Pro. 3:12

(3) provision (i.e., Exodus) – Deut. 32:1

(4) will never forsake – Ps. 27:10

(5) loves – Ps. 103:13

(6) friend/guide – Jer. 3:4

(7) healer/forgiver – Jer. 3:22

(8) mercy giver – Jer. 31:20

(9) trainer – Hosea 11:1-4

(10) special son – Mal. 3:17

b. mother (metaphor)

(1) will never forsake – Ps. 27:10

(2) love of a nursing mother – Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13 and Hosea 11:4 (with the proposed textual emendation of "yoke" to "infant")

II. New Testament

A. The Trinity (texts where all three are mentioned)

1. Gospels

a. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19

b. John 14:26

2. Paul

a. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10

b. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6

c. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14

d. Gal. 4:4-6

e. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-

f. I Thess. 1:2-5

g. II Thess. 2:13

h. Titus 3:4-6

3. Peter – I Pet. 1:2

4. Jude – vv. 20-21

B. Jesus

1. Jesus as “only begotten” – John 1:18; 3:16,18; I John 4:9

2. Jesus as “Son of God” – Matt. 4:3; 14:33; 16:16; Luke 1:32,35; John 1:34,49; 6:69; 11:27

3. Jesus as Beloved Son – Matt. 3:17; 17:5

4. Jesus’ use of *abba* for God – Mark 14:36

5. Jesus’ use of PRONOUNS to show both His and our relationship to God

a. “My Father,” e.g., John 5:18; 10:30,33; 19:7; 20:17

b. “your Father,” e.g., Matt. 17:24-27

c. “our Father,” e.g., Matt. 6:9,14,26

C. One of many family metaphors to describe the intimate relationship between God and humankind:

1. God as Father

2. Believers as

a. sons of God

b. children

c. born of God

d. born again

e. adopted

f. brought forth

g. family of God

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:8-15

⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. ⁹For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the *preaching of the* gospel of His Son, is my witness *as to* how unceasingly I make mention of you, ¹⁰always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. ¹¹For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; ¹²that is, that I may be encouraged together with you *while* among you, each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine. ¹³I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

1:8 “First” In this context “first” means “from the beginning” or “I must begin” (J. B. Phillips).

▣ **“I thank my God through Jesus Christ”** Paul normally addresses his prayers to God through Jesus Christ. Jesus is our only way to approach God! See Special Topic: Paul’s Prayers of Praise and Thanksgiving at 7:25.

▣ **“for you all”** This use of “all,” like v. 7, may reflect the jealousy and conflict between the believing Jewish leaders who fled Rome under Nero’s edict and the resultant believing Gentile leaders who had replaced them for a few years. Romans 9-11 addresses this same issue.

It is also possible that the inclusion is addressed to “the weak” and “the strong” of Rom. 14:1-15:13. God loves all of the church at Rome and He loves them equally!

▣ **“because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world”** Romans 16:19 made allusion to the same truth. This was obviously an Oriental overstatement (hyperbole) referring to the Roman world (cf. I Thess. 1:8).

1:9 “God. . .is my witness” Paul was taking an oath in God’s name (cf. 9:1; II Cor. 1:23; 11:10-11,31; 12:19; Gal. 1:20; I Thess. 2:5). This was his Jewish way of asserting his truthfulness.

▣

NASB “how unceasingly”
NKJV, NRSV “without ceasing”
NJB “continually mention”
NIV “how constantly”

This theme of Paul’s constant and urgent prayers (cf. I Thess. 1:2; 2:13; II Tim. 1:3) should be an example church leaders diligently follow (cf. I Thess. 5:17). Prayer opens a powerful spiritual door. We have not because we ask not (James 4:2).

▣ **“in my spirit”** This is a good example of the use of *pneuma* for the human spirit (cf. 8:5,10,16; 12:11) used in the sense of human life (i.e., breath, Hebrew *ruach*, BDB 924, cf. Gen. 6:17; 7:15,22).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT (*PNEUMA*) IN THE NT

The Greek term for “spirit” is used in several ways in the NT. Here are some representative classifications and examples.

- A. of the Triune God
 - 1. of the Father (cf. John 4:24)
 - 2. of the Son (cf. Rom. 8:9-10; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; I Pet. 1:11)
 - 3. of the Holy Spirit (cf. Mark 1:11; Matt. 3:16; 10:20; John 3:5,6,8; 7:39; 14:17; Acts 2:4; 5:9; 8:29,35; Rom. 1:4; 8:11,16; I Cor. 2:4,10,11,13,14; 12:7)
- B. of the human life force
 - 1. of Jesus (cf. Mark 8:12; John 11:33,38; 13:21)
 - 2. of mankind (cf. Matt. 22:43; Acts 7:59; 17:16; 20:22; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; I Cor. 2:11; 5:3-5; 7:34; 15:45; 16:18; II Cor. 2:13; 7:13; Phil. 4:23; Col. 2:5)
- C. of the spiritual realm
 - 1. spiritual beings
 - a. good (i.e., angels, cf. Acts 23:8-9; Heb. 1:14)
 - b. evil (i.e., demonic, cf. Matt. 8:16; 10:1; 12:43,45; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16; 19:12-21; Eph. 6:12)
 - c. ghosts (cf. Luke 24:37)

2. spiritual discernment (cf. Matt. 5:3; 26:41; John 3:6; 4:23; Acts 18:25; 19:21; Rom. 2:29; 7:6; 8:4,10; 12:11; I Cor. 14:37)
3. spiritual things (cf. John 6:63; Rom. 2:29; 8:2,5,9,15; 15:27; I Cor. 9:11; 14:12)
4. spiritual gifts (cf. I Cor. 12:1; 14:1)
5. inspiration of the Spirit (cf. Matt. 22:43; Luke 2:27; Eph. 1:17)
6. spiritual body (cf. I Cor. 15:44-45)

D. Characterizes

1. the attitude of the world (cf. Rom. 8:15; 11:8; I Cor. 2:12)
2. thinking process of humans (cf. Acts 6:10; Rom. 8:6; I Cor. 4:2)

E. of the physical realm

1. wind (cf. Matt. 7:25,27; John 3:8; Acts 2:2)
2. breath (cf. Acts 17:25; II Thess. 2:8)

It is obvious that this term must be interpreted in light of its immediate context. There are various shades of meaning which can refer to (1) the physical world; (2) the unseen world; (3) as well as persons of this physical world or of the spiritual realm.

The Holy Spirit is that part of the Triune God who is supremely active in this stage of history. The new age of the Spirit has come. All that is good, holy, right, and true relates to Him. His presence, gifts, and ministry are crucial in the furtherance of the gospel and the success of the Kingdom of God (cf. John 14 and 16). He does not draw attention to Himself, but to Christ (cf. John 16:13-14). He convicts, convinces, woos, baptizes, and matures all believers (cf. John 16:8-11).

1:10 “always in my prayers making request” Paul did not start this church and yet he consistently prayed for them (cf. II Cor. 11:28), as he did for all his churches! See Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer at 9:3. However, Paul had many friends and co-workers in the Roman church as chapter 16 clearly shows.

▣ **“if”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Paul planned to visit Rome on his way to Spain (cf. 15:22-24). He probably did not plan to stay a long time. Paul always wanted to minister in a new field where no other person had worked (cf. 15:20; II Cor. 10:15,16). It is possible that one of the purposes of the Roman letter was to solicit funds for his missionary journey to Spain (cf. 15:24).

▣ **“by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you”** This is paralleled in v. 13 and 15:32. Paul did not feel that his life and travel plans belonged to himself, but to God (cf. Acts 18:21; I Cor. 4:19; 16:7). See Special Topic at 12:2.

Also notice that God’s will can be affected by believers’ prayers!

1:11 “For I long to see you” This parallels 15:23. For a long time Paul wanted to meet the believers in Rome (cf. Acts 19:21).

▣ **“that I may impart some spiritual gift to you”** The phrase “spiritual gift” was used in the sense of spiritual insight or blessing (cf. 11:29; 15:27). Paul saw himself as uniquely called to be the Apostle to the Gentiles (cf. v. 15).

▣ **“that you may be established”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INFINITIVE of *histēmi*. The word has three meanings.

1. establish, Rom. 1:11; 16:25; I Thess. 3:13; II Pet. 1:12
2. strengthen, Luke 22:32; I Thess. 3:2; II Thess. 2:17; 3:3; James 5:8; Rev. 3:2
3. a Semitic idiom for making a firm decision, Luke 9:51

See Special Topic at 5:2.

1:12 This is the purpose of Christian fellowship. The gifts are meant to unite believers into a ministering community. Believers are gifted for the common good (cf. I Cor. 12:7). All gifts are relevant. All the gifts are given by the Spirit at salvation (cf. I Cor. 12:11). All believers are called, gifted, full-time ministers (cf. Eph. 4:11-12). Paul clearly states his sense of Apostolic authority, but also a community-wide mutuality. Believers need one another! Believers are the Body of Christ.

1:13 “I do not want you to be unaware, brethren” This is an idiom which Paul uses often to introduce important statements (cf. 11:25; I Cor. 10:1; 12:1; II Cor. 1:8; I Thess. 4:13). It is similar in literary purpose to Jesus’ “Amen, amen.”

▣ **“and have been prevented thus far”** This is a PASSIVE VERB. This same phrase occurs in I Thess. 2:18 where Satan is the agent. Paul believed his life was guided by God but disrupted by Satan. Somehow both are true (cf. Job 1-2; Dan. 10). The use of this term in 15:22 implies the hindrance was Paul’s missionary work in the eastern Mediterranean area, which is not yet complete (but close).

▣ **“that I might obtain some fruit among you”** In this context “fruit” may refer to converts, but in John 15:1-8 and Gal. 5:22 it referred to Christian maturity. Matthew 7 says “by your fruit you shall be known,” but it does not define the term fruit. The best parallel is probably Phil. 1:22, where Paul uses this same agricultural metaphor.

1:14 “I am under obligation” Paul uses this term several times in Romans.

1. Paul is obligated to preach the gospel to all Gentiles (here).
2. Paul is not obligated to “the flesh” (8:12).
3. The Gentile church is obligated to help the mother church in Jerusalem (15:27).

▣ **“to Greeks”** This referred to the civilized, cultured people around the Mediterranean Sea. Alexander the Great and his followers had Hellenized the known world. The Romans had taken over and assimilated the Greek culture.

▣ **“to Barbarians”** This (*onomatopoeia*) term meant the uneducated or uncultured people groups, usually to the north. It was used of people who did not speak Greek. Their speech sounded like “bar bar bar” to the Greeks and Romans.

▣ **“to the wise and to the foolish”** It is possible that this is parallel in the Greek text to “barbarians,” but not necessarily so. This may be another way of referring to all people groups and individuals.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:16-17

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “BUT THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

1:16-17 Verses 16-17 are the theme of the entire book. This theme is amplified and summarized in 3:21-31.

1:16

NASB, NRSV “I am not ashamed of the gospel”
NKJV “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”
TEV “I have complete confidence in the gospel”
NJB “I am not ashamed of the Good News:”

Paul may be alluding to Jesus’ words in Mark 8:38 and Luke 9:26. He is not ashamed of the content of the gospel or its resulting persecution (cf. II Tim. 1:12,16,18).

In I Cor. 1:23 the Jews were ashamed of the gospel because it affirmed a suffering Messiah and the Greeks because it affirmed the resurrection of the body.

▣ **“salvation”** In the OT, the Hebrew term (*yasho*) primarily referred to physical deliverance (cf. James 5:15), but in the NT the Greek term (*sōzō*) refers primarily to spiritual deliverance (cf. I Cor. 1:18, 21). See Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 124-126.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION (OT Term)

This term (BDB 447) has several connotations.

1. welfare, prosperity, Job 30:15
2. divine salvation which encompasses both physical and spiritual aspects
 - a. Gen. 49:18
 - b. Deut. 32:15
 - c. Ps. 3:2,8; 22:1; 35:3; 62:2; 69:29; 70:5; 78:22; 80:3; 89:26; 91:16; 106:4; 140:7
 - d. Isa. 12:2; 33:2; 51:6,8; 52:7,10; 56:1; 59:11; 60:18; 62:1
3. the idea of physical and spiritual deliverance is clearly present in Jonah 2:9-10
4. often “rejoicing” is related to YHWH’s salvation, I Sam. 2:1; Isa. 25:9; 26:1; Ps. 9:14; 13:5; 35:9

Salvation involves the implementation of YHWH’s original intended fellowship and society with His human creatures. It involves individual and societal wholeness!

▣
NASB “to every one who believes”
NKJV “for everyone who believes”
NRSV “to everyone who has faith”
TEV “all who believe”
NJB “all who have faith”

The gospel is for all humans (oh, how I love the words “everyone,” “whosoever,” “all,” see note at 1:5, 6th item), but believing is one of the conditions for acceptance (cf. Acts 16:30-31). The other is repentance (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16 and 19; 20:21). God deals with mankind by means of covenant (see Special Topic at 9:4). He always takes the initiative and sets the agenda (cf. John 6:44,65). But there are several reciprocal conditions (see note at 1:5, 4th item).

The Greek term, here translated “believe,” can also be translated in English by the terms “faith” or “trust.” The Greek word has a wider connotation than any one English word. Notice it is a PRESENT PARTICIPLE. Saving faith is continuing faith (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2; II Cor. 2:15; I Thess. 4:14)! See special Topic at 10:4.

Originally the related Hebrew terms behind this Greek term for “faith” meant a stable stance, a man with his feet apart so that he could not be easily moved. The opposite OT metaphor would be “my feet were in

the miry clay” (Ps. 40:2), “my feet almost slipped” (Ps. 73:2). The Hebrew related roots, *emun*, *emunah*, *aman*, came to be used metaphorically of someone who was trustworthy, loyal, or dependable. Saving faith does not reflect fallen mankind’s ability to be faithful, but God’s! Believers’ hopes do not reside in their abilities but in God’s character and promises. It is His trustworthiness, His faithfulness, His promises! See Special Topic at 1:5.

▣ **“to the Jew first”** The reason for this is discussed briefly in 2:9-10 and 3:1-20 and fully developed in chapters 9-11. It follows Jesus’ statements in Matt. 10:6; 15:24; Mark 7:27; John 4:22.

This may relate to the jealousy between believing Jew and Gentile leadership in the Roman church.

1:17 “the righteousness of God” This phrase in context referred to (1) God’s character, and (2) how He gives that character to sinful mankind. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) translation has “this is what reveals the justice of God.” While this does refer to the believer’s moral lifestyle, it primarily concerns his legal standing before the Righteous Judge. This imputation of the righteousness of God to fallen, sinful mankind, since the Reformation, has been characterized as “justification by grace through faith” (cf. II Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). This is the very verse that changed Martin Luther’s life and theology!

However, the goal of justification is sanctification, Christlikeness, or the righteous character of God (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 4:13; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). Righteousness is not only a legal pronouncement, it is a call to a holy life; the image of God in mankind is to be functionally restored (cf. II Cor. 5:21).

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous” (BDB 841). The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s loyalty was tested (cf. Genesis 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God’s first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind’s repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness).
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness).
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. Based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaio sunē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of Deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy there was no clear delineation between the secular (society’s norms) and the sacred (God’s will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as “justice” (relating to society) and “righteousness” (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father’s love, mercy, and grace; the Son’s life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit’s wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine’s position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term “the righteousness of God” is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification], while for the Catholics it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view all of the Bible from Genesis 4 - Revelation 20 is a record of God’s restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). God’s image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
 - a. Romans 3:26
 - b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
 - c. II Timothy 4:8
 - d. Revelation 16:5
2. Jesus is righteous
 - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
 - b. Matthew 27:19
 - c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7
3. God’s will for His creation is righteousness
 - a. Leviticus 19:2
 - b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)

4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
 - a. Romans 3:21-31
 - b. Romans 4
 - c. Romans 5:6-11
 - d. Galatians 3:6-14
 - e. Given by God
 - 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
 - 2) I Corinthians 1:30
 - 3) Ephesians 2:8-9
 - f. Received by faith
 - 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
 - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
 - g. Through acts of the Son
 - 1) Romans 5:21
 - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
 - 3) Philippians 2:6-11
5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
 - a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
 - b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
 - c. I Timothy 6:11
 - d. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
 - e. I John 3:7
 - f. I Peter 2:24
6. God will judge the world by righteousness
 - a. Acts 17:31
 - b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

1. a decree of God
2. a gift of God
3. an act of Christ

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the *Parousia!*

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* from IVP

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther's view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God's righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer's relationship to God has three aspects.

1. the gospel is a person (emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
2. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
3. the gospel is a changed life (Catholic emphasis)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!



NASB, NKJV "from faith to faith"

NRSV "through faith for faith"

TEV "it is through faith, from beginning to end"

NJB "it shows how faith leads to faith"

This phrase has two PREPOSITIONS, *ek* and *eis*, which denote a transition or development. He uses this same structure in II Cor. 2:16 and *apo* and *eis* in II Cor. 3:18. Christianity is a gift which is expected to become a characteristic and a lifestyle.

There are several possibilities in translating this phrase. The Williams NT translates it as "the Way of faith that leads to greater faith." The main theological points are

1. faith comes from God ("revealed")
2. mankind must respond and continue to respond
3. faith must result in a godly life

One thing is certain, "faith" in Christ is crucial (cf. 5:1; Phil. 3:9). God's offer of salvation is conditioned on a faith response (cf. Mark 1:15; John 1:12; 3:16; Acts 3:16 and 19; 20:21). See Special Topics at 1:5; 4:5; and 10:4.



NASB "But the righteous man shall live by faith"

NKJV "The just shall live by faith"

NRSV "The one who is righteous will live by faith"

TEV "He who is put right with God through faith shall live"

NJB "The upright man finds life through faith"

This was a quote from Hab. 2:4, but not from the Masoretic Text (MT) or the Septuagint (LXX). In the OT "faith" had the expanded metaphorical meaning of "trustworthiness," "faithfulness," or "loyalty to" (see Special Topic at 1:5). Saving faith is based on God's faithfulness (cf. 3:5,21,22,25,26). However, human faithfulness is evidence that one has trusted in God's provision. This same OT text is quoted in Gal. 3:11 and Heb. 10:38. The next literary unit, Romans 1:18-3:20, reveals the opposite of faithfulness to God.

It may be helpful to list how several modern commentators understand the last part of the phrase.

1. Vaughan: "begins in faith and ends in faith"
2. Hodge: "by faith alone"
3. Barrett: "on the basis of nothing but faith"
4. Knox: "faith first and last"
5. Stagg: "the upright out of faith shall live"

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:18-23

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

1:18 “for” Notice the number of times *gar* is used in the theme statement of verses 16-17—three times, and now it introduces Paul’s first point of the gospel (1:18-3:31), which is contrasted with the power of God unto salvation (1:16-17).

▣ **“the wrath of God”** Verses 18-23 depict the pagan world of Paul’s day. Paul’s characterization of the pagan world is also found in Jewish literature (cf. *Wisdom of Solomon* 13:1ff. and *Letter of Aristeas*, 134-38) and even in Greek and Roman ethical writings. The same Bible that tells us of God’s love also reveals His wrath (cf. vv. 23-32; 2:5,8; 3:5; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22; 12:19; 13:4-5).

Both wrath and love are human terms which are applied to God. They express the truth that God has a way He wants believers to respond to and live. One’s willful rejection of God’s will (the gospel of Christ) results in consequences both temporal, as in this verse, and eschatological (cf. 2:5). However, God must not be viewed as vindictive. Judgment is His “strange work” (cf. Isa. 28:21ff). Love is His character, compare Deut. 5:9 to 5:10; 7:9. In Him justice and mercy predominate. Yet all will give an account to God (cf. Eccl. 12:13-14; Gal. 6:7), even Christians (cf. 14:10-12; II Cor. 5:10).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE)

- I. This type of language is very common in the OT (some examples)
 - A. Physical body parts
 1. eyes – Gen. 1:4,31; 6:8; Exod. 33:17; Num. 14:14; Deut. 11:12; Zech. 4:10
 2. hands – Exod. 15:17; Num. 11:23; Deut. 2:15
 3. arm – Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Num. 11:23; Deut. 4:34; 5:15
 4. ears – Num. 11:18; I Sam. 8:21; II Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 5:1; 10:17; 18:6
 5. face – Exod. 32:30; 33:11; Num. 6:25; Deut. 34:10; Ps. 114:7
 6. finger – Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3
 7. voice – Gen. 3:8,10; Exod. 15:26; 19:19; Deut. 26:17; 27:10
 8. feet – Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 43:7
 9. human form – Exod. 24:9-11; Ps. 47; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26
 10. the angel of the Lord – Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:4,13-21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 - B. Physical actions
 1. speaking as the mechanism of creation – Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26
 2. walking (i.e., sound of) in Eden – Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Hab. 3:15

3. closing the door of Noah's ark – Gen. 7:16
4. smelling sacrifices – Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31; Amos 5:21
5. coming down – Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20
6. burying Moses – Deut. 34:6

C. Human emotions (some examples)

1. regret/repent – Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:29,35; Amos 7:3,6
2. anger – Exod. 4:14; 15:7; Num. 11:10; 12:9; 22:22; 25:3,4; 32:10,13,14; Deut. 6:5; 7:4; 29:20
3. jealousy – Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16,21; Josh. 24:19
4. loathe/abhor – Lev. 20:23; 26:30; Deut. 32:19

D. Family terms (some examples)

1. Father
 - a. of Israel – Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5
 - b. of the king – II Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:7
 - c. metaphors of fatherly action – Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 32:1; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Jer. 3:4,22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Mal. 3:17
2. Parent – Hosea 11:1-4
3. Mother – Ps. 27:10 (analogy to nursing mother); Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13
4. Young faithful lover – Hosea 1-3

II. Reasons for the use of this type of language

- A. It is a necessity for God to reveal Himself to human beings. The very pervasive concept of God as male is an anthropomorphism because God is spirit!
- B. God takes the most meaningful aspects of human life and uses them to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (father, mother, parent, lover)
- C. Though necessary, God does not want to be limited to any physical form (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5)
- D. The ultimate anthropomorphism is the incarnation of Jesus! God became physical, touchable (cf. I John 1:1-3). The message of God became the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18).

▣ **“is revealed”** As the gospel is a revealed truth (v. 17), so too, the wrath of God! Neither is an act of human discovery or logic.

▣ **“who suppress the truth”** This referred to human willful rejection, not ignorance (cf. vv. 21,32; John 3:17-21). This phrase can mean

1. they know the truth but reject it
2. their lifestyle shows they reject the truth
3. their lives and/or words cause others not to know and receive the truth

SPECIAL TOPIC: “TRUTH” IN PAUL’S WRITINGS

Paul's usage of this term and its related forms comes from its OT equivalent, *emet*, which means trustworthy or faithful (BDB 53). In interbiblical Jewish writings it was used of truth in contrast to falsehood. Maybe the closest parallel would be the Dead Sea Scrolls' "Thanksgiving Hymns," where it is used of revealed doctrines. The members of the Essene Community became "witnesses of truth."

Paul uses the term as a way of referring to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

1. Romans 1:18,25; 2:8,20; 3:7; 15:8
2. I Corinthians 13:6
3. II Corinthians 4:2; 6:7; 11:10; 13:8
4. Galatians 2:5,14; 5:7
5. Ephesians 1:13; 6:14
6. Colossians 1:5,6
7. II Thessalonians 2:10,12,13
8. I Timothy 2:4; 3:15; 4:3; 6:5
9. II Timothy 2:15,18,25; 3:7,8; 4:4
10. Titus 1:1,14

Paul also uses the term as a way of expressing his speaking accurately

1. Acts 26:25
2. Romans 9:1
3. II Corinthians 7:14; 12:6
4. Ephesians 4:25
5. Philippians 1:18
6. I Timothy 2:7

He also uses it to describe his motives in I Cor. 5:8 and lifestyle (also for all Christians) in Eph. 4:24; 5:9; Phil. 4:8. He sometimes uses it for people.

1. God, Rom. 3:4 (cf. John 3:33; 17:17)
2. Jesus, Eph. 4:21 (similar to John 14:6)
3. Apostolic witnesses, Titus 1:13
4. Paul, II Cor. 6:8

Only Paul uses the verb form (i.e., *alētheuō*) in Gal. 4:16 and Eph. 4:15, where it refers to the gospel. For further study consult Colin Brown (ed), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, pp. 784-902.

1:19 “that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them” All humans know something of God from creation (cf. v. 20; Job 12:7-10 and Ps. 19:1-6 through nature). In theology this is called “natural revelation.” It is not complete, but it is the basis of God’s holding responsible those who have never been exposed to God’s “special revelation” in Scripture (cf. Ps. 19:7-14) or, ultimately, in Jesus (cf. Col. 1:15; 2:9).

The term “know” was used in two senses in the NT: (1) its OT sense of intimate personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5) and (2) its Greek sense of facts about a subject (cf. v. 21). The gospel is both a Person to be welcomed and a message about that Person to be received and believed! In this verse it was used only in the sense of #2.

SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (using mostly Deuteronomy as a paradigm)

The Hebrew word “know” (BDB 393) has several senses (semantic fields) in the *Qal*.

1. to understand good and evil – Gen. 3:22; Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:14-15; Jonah 4:11
2. to know by understanding – Deut. 9:2,3,6; 18:21
3. to know by experience – Deut. 3:19; 4:35; 8:2,3,5; 11:2; 20:20; 31:13; Josh. 23:14
4. to consider – Deut. 4:39; 11:2; 29:16
5. to know personally
 - a. a person – Gen. 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 22:2; 33:9
 - b. a god – Deut. 11:28; 13:2,6,13; 28:64; 29:26; 32:17
 - c. YHWH – Deut. 4:35,39; 7:9; 29:6; Isa. 1:3; 56:10-11
 - d. sexual – Gen. 4:1,17,25; 24:16; 38:26
6. a learned skill or knowledge – Isa. 29:11,12; Amos 5:16
7. be wise – Deut. 29:4; Pro. 1:2; 4:1; Isa. 29:24
8. God’s knowledge
 - a. of Moses – Deut. 34:10
 - b. of Israel – Deut. 31:21,27,29

1:20 This verse mentions three aspects of God.

1. His invisible attributes (His character, cf. Col. 1:15; I Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27)
2. His eternal power (seen in natural creation, cf. Ps. 19:1-6)
3. His divine nature (seen in His acts and motives of creation, cf. Genesis 1-2)

▣ **“for since the creation of the world”** The PREPOSITION *apo* is used in a temporal sense. A similar phrase is found in Mark 10:6; 13:19; II Pet. 3:4. The invisible God is now seen in

1. physical creation (this verse)
2. Scripture (Ps. 19, 119)
3. ultimately in Jesus (cf. John 14:9)

▣ **“divine nature”** From Greek literature *theiotēs* could be translated “divine majesty.” This is seen supremely in Jesus. He uniquely bears the divine image (cf. II Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:3). He is God’s full revelation in human form (Col. 1:19; 2:9). The wonderful truth of the gospel is that fallen mankind, through faith in Christ, will share Christlikeness (cf. Heb. 12:10; I John 3:2). The image of God in humanity (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) has been restored (*theios*, cf. II Pet. 1:3-4)!

▣

NASB “have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made”
NKJV “are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made”
NRSV “have been understood and seen through the things he has made”
TEV “have been clearly seen; they are perceived in the things that God has made”
NJB “have been clearly seen by the mind’s understanding of created things”

The combination of *noeō* (cf. Matt. 15:17) and *kathoraō* (both PRESENT PASSIVE) implies a true perception. God has written two books: (1) nature (cf. Ps. 19:1-6) and (2) Scripture (cf. Ps. 19:7-14). They are both capable of human understanding and demand a response (cf. *Wisdom* 13:1-9).

▣ **“so that they are without excuse”** This is literally “no legal defense.” This Greek term (*a plus apologeomai*) is used only here and in 2:1 in the NT. Remember the theological purpose of 1:18-3:20 is to show the spiritual lostness of all mankind. Humans are responsible for the knowledge they do have. God holds humans responsible only for that which they know or could know (cf. 4:15; 5:13).

1:21 “for even though they knew God” Humans are not progressing religiously—they are progressively evil. Since Genesis 3 humanity has been going downhill. The darkness is increasing!

▣ **“they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks”** This is the tragedy of pagan idolatry in vv. 23, 24 (cf. Jer. 2:9-13). Believers “glorify” God by Christlike living (cf. Matt. 5:16; Rom. 12:1-2; I Cor. 6:20; 10:31; Phil. 1:20; I Pet. 4:11). YHWH wants a people who reflect/reveal His character to a fallen, blind world!

▣ **“but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”** *The New Testament: A New Translation* by Olaf M. Morlie has “rather they busied themselves with silly speculations about Him, and their stupid minds groped about in the dark.” Human religious systems are monuments to spiritual rebellion and pride (cf. v. 22; Col. 2:16-23).

The word translated “futile” was used in the LXX to refer to the “vain,” “non-existent” idols of Israel’s neighbors. Paul was a Hebrew thinker who knew the Septuagint. The use of Greek words in the LXX is a better guide to the NT authors’ thoughts than Greek lexicons.

The two VERBS are AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVES. Does the PASSIVE VOICE imply that their lack of understanding and proper response was because God veiled their hearts or that their rejection of the light had hardened their hearts (cf. 10:12-16; II Kgs. 17:15; Jer. 2:5; Eph. 4:17-19)? This is the same theological question related to Pharaoh in the exodus.

God hardened his heart

- Exod. 4:21
- 9:12
- 10:20
- 11:10
- 14:4
- 14:8
- 14:17

Pharaoh hardened his own heart

- Exod. 8:15
- 8:32
- 9:34

In 9:35 the hardening could refer to God or Pharaoh. This is the mystery of divine sovereignty and human free will!

▣ **“heart”** This was used in the OT sense of the entire person. However, it was often a way of referring to the thinking and feeling process. See Special Topic at 1:24.

1:22

NASB, NKJV “Professing to be wise, they became fools”

NRSV “Claiming to be wise, they became fools”

TEV “They say they are wise, but they are fools”

NJB “The more they called themselves philosophers, the more stupid they grew”

From the Greek word “fool” we get the English “moron.” The problem is in mankind’s pride and confidence in their own knowledge (cf. I Cor. 1:18-31; Col. 2:8-23). This goes back to Genesis 3. Knowledge brought separation and judgment. It is not that human knowledge is always wrong, it is just not ultimate!

1:23 Willfully ignorant humans who were made in God’s image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6) turned God into earthly images such as

1. animals (Egypt)
2. forces of nature (Persia)
3. human forms (Greece/Rome)—idols! Even God’s own people did this (cf. Deut. 4:15-24)

Some new forms of this old sin are

1. environmentalism (mother earth)
2. New Age eastern thought (mysticism, spiritualism, and the occult)
3. atheistic humanism (Marxism, utopianism, progressive idealism, and ultimate faith in politics or education)
4. holistic medicine (health and longevity)
5. education.

▣ “glory” See Special Topic at 3:23

▣ “corruptible man” See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: DESTROY, RUIN, CORRUPT (*PHTHEIRŌ*)

The basic meaning of this term *phtheirō* is destroy, ruin, corrupt, or spoil. It can be used for

1. financial ruin (possibly II Cor. 7:2)
2. physical destruction (cf. I Cor. 3:17a)
3. moral corruption (cf. Rom. 1:23; 8:21; I Cor. 15:33,42,50; Gal. 6:8; Rev. 19:2)
4. sexual seduction (cf. II Cor. 11:3)
5. eternal destruction (cf. II Pet. 2:12,19)
6. perishing traditions of men (cf. Col. 2:22; I Cor. 3:17b)

Often this term is used in the same context as its negated opposite (cf. Rom. 1:23; I Cor. 9:25; 15:50,53). Notice the parallel contrasts between our earthly physical bodies and our heavenly eternal bodies.

1. corruptible vs. incorruptible, I Cor. 15:42,50
2. dishonor vs. glory, I Cor. 15:43
3. weakness vs. power, I Cor. 15:43
4. natural body vs. spiritual body, I Cor. 15:44
5. first Adam vs. last Adam, I Cor. 15:45
6. image of the earthly vs. image of the heavenly, I Cor. 15:49

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:24-25

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. ²⁵For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

1:24, 26, 28 “God gave them over” This is the worst possible judgment. It is God saying “let fallen humanity have their own way” (cf. Ps. 81:12; Hosea 4:17; Acts 7:42 quotes several OT texts on this theological issue). Verses 23-32 describe God’s rejection (temporal wrath) of the pagan world and its religiosity (and ours)! Paganism was and is characterized by sexual perversion and exploitation!

1:24 “hearts” See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

The Greek term *kardia* is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *lēb* (BDB 523). It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403-404).

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; II Cor. 3:2-3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual life (i.e., moral)
 - a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; I Cor. 14:25; I Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
 - b. used of mankind’s spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 1:22)
3. the center of the thought life (i.e., intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; II Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in II Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)
4. the center of the volition (i.e., will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; I Cor. 4:5; 7:37; II Cor. 9:7)
5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)
6. unique place of the Spirit’s activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e., Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
7. The heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms
 - a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, “God was grieved to His heart,” also notice Hosea 11:8-9
 - b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, “with all your heart and all your soul”
 - c. Deut. 10:16, “uncircumcised heart” and Rom. 2:29
 - d. Ezek. 18:31-32, “a new heart”
 - e. Ezek. 36:26, “a new heart” vs. “a heart of stone”

1:25 “exchanged the truth of God for a lie” This can be understood in several ways.

1. the self-deification of mankind (cf. II Thess. 2:4,11)
2. mankind’s worship of that which he has made—idols (cf. Isa. 44:20; Jer. 13:25; 16:19) instead of YHWH who created all things (cf. vv. 18-23)
3. mankind’s ultimate rejection of the truth of the gospel (cf. Jn 14:17; I John 2:21,27)

In context #2 fits best.

☐ **“worshiped and served”** Mankind will always have gods. All humans sense there is someone, some truth, or something beyond themselves.

☐ **“who is blessed forever. Amen”** Paul burst into a Jewish blessing, which is so characteristic of him (cf. Rom. 9:5; II Cor. 11:31). Paul’s prays often as he writes (cf. 9:5; 11:36; 15:33; 16:27).

☐ **“forever”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (GREEK IDIOM)

One Greek idiomatic phrase is “unto the ages” (cf. Luke 1:33; Rom. 1:25; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; I Tim. 1:17), which may reflect the Hebrew *‘olam*. See Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 319-321, and OT Special Topic: Forever (*‘Olam*). Other related phrases are “unto the age” (cf. Matt. 21:19 [Mark 11:14]; Luke 1:55; John 6:58; 8:35; 12:34; 13:8; 14:16; II Cor. 9:9) and “of the age of the ages” (cf. Eph. 3:21). There seems to be no distinction between these Greek idioms for “forever.” The term “ages” may be PLURAL in a figurative sense of the rabbinical grammatical construction called “the plural of majesty” or it may refer to the concept of several “ages” in the Jewish sense of “age of wickedness,” “age to come,” or “age of righteousness.”

▣ “Amen” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

I. OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The term “Amen” is from a Hebrew word for
 - 1. “truth” (*emeth*, BDB 49)
 - 2. “truthfulness” (*emun, emunah*, BDB 53)
 - 3. “faith” or “faithfulness”
 - 4. “trust” (*dmn*, BDB 52)
- B. Its etymology is from a person’s stable physical stance. The opposite would be one who is unstable, slipping (cf. Deut. 28:64-67; 38:16; Psalm 40:2; 73:18; Jeremiah 23:12) or stumbling (cf. Ps. 73:2). From this literal usage developed the metaphorical extension of faithful, trustworthy, loyal, and dependable (cf. Gen. 15:16; Hab. 2:4).
- C. Special usages
 - 1. a pillar, II Kgs. 18:16 (I Tim. 3:15)
 - 2. assurance, Exod. 17:12
 - 3. steadiness, Exod. 17:12
 - 4. stability, Isa. 33:6; 34:5-7
 - 5. true, I Kgs. 10:6; 17:24; 22:16; Pro. 12:22
 - 6. firm, II Chr. 20:20; Isa. 7:9
 - 7. reliable (Torah), Ps. 119:43,142,151,168
- D. In the OT two other Hebrew terms are used for active faith.
 - 1. *bathach* (BDB 105), trust
 - 2. *yra* (BDB 431), fear, respect, worship (cf. Gen. 22:12)
- E. From the sense of trust or trustworthiness developed a liturgical usage which was used to affirm a true or trustworthy statement of another (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:13; 70:19; 89:52; 106:48).
- F. The theological key to this term is not mankind’s faithfulness, but YHWH’s (cf. Exod. 34:6; Duet. 32:4; Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2). Fallen humanity’s only hope is the merciful faithful covenant loyalty of YHWH and His promises. Those who know YHWH are to be like Him (cf. Hab. 2:4). The Bible is a history and a record of God restoring His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in mankind.

Salvation restores mankind's ability to have intimate fellowship with God. This is why we were created.

II. NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The use of the word "amen" as a concluding liturgical affirmation of a statement's trustworthiness of a statement is common in the NT (cf. I Cor. 14:16; II Cor. 1:20; Rev. 1:7; 5:14; 7:12).
- B. The use of the term as a close to a prayer is common in the NT (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; 6:18; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; II Thess. 3:18; I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; II Tim. 4:18).
- C. Jesus is the only one who used the term (often doubled in John) to introduce significant statements (cf. Luke 4:24; 12:37; 18:17,29; 21:32; 23:43)
- D. It is used as a title for Jesus in Rev. 3:14 (possibly a title of YHWH from Isa. 65:16).
- E. The concept of faithfulness or faith, trustworthiness, or trust is expressed in the Greek term *pistos* or *pistis*, which is translated into English as "trust," "faith," "believe."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:26-27

²⁶For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

1:26,27 Homosexuality is one example of life apart from God's obvious will in creation (be fruitful). It was a sin and a major cultural problem

1. in the OT (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:18)
2. in the Greco-Roman world (cf. I Cor. 6:9; I Tim. 1:10)
3. in our day

Homosexuality is probably listed as one example of the fallen life because of the entire context's orientation to Genesis 1-3. Mankind was made in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was made male and female (cf. Gen. 1:27). God's command was to be fruitful and multiply (cf. Gen. 1:28; 9:1,7). Mankind's fall (cf. Genesis 3) disrupted God's plan and will. Homosexuality is an obvious violation! However it must be stated that this is not the only sin mentioned in the context (cf. vv. 29-31). All sins show mankind's separation from God and their deserved punishment. All sin, especially lifestyle sin, is abhorrent to God.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOMOSEXUALITY

There is much modern cultural pressure to accept homosexuality as an appropriate alternate lifestyle. The Bible condemns it as a destructive lifestyle, out of the will of God for His creation.

1. it violates the command of Gen. 1 to be fruitful and multiply
2. it characterizes pagan worship and culture (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; and Jude 7)
3. it reveals a self-centered independence from God (cf. I Cor. 6:9-10)

However, before I leave this topic let me assert God's love and forgiveness to all rebellious human beings. Christians have no right to act hatefully and arrogantly towards this particular sin, especially when it is obvious that all of us sin. Prayer, concern, testimony, and compassion do far more in this area than

vehement condemnation. God’s Word and His Spirit will do the condemning if we let them. All sexual sins, not just this one, are an abomination to God and lead to judgment. Sexuality is a gift from God for mankind’s well-being, joy, and a stable society. But this powerful, God-given urge is often turned into rebellious, self-centered, pleasure-seeking, “more-for-me-at-any-cost” living (cf. Rom. 8:1-8; Gal. 6:7-8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:28-32

²⁸And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³²and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

1:28-31 This is one sentence in Greek. It characterized rebellious, fallen, independent mankind (cf. Rom. 13:13; I Cor. 5:11; 6:9; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; I Tim. 1:10; Rev. 21:8).

Humanity’s sin was that they chose existence apart from God. Hell is that existence made permanent. Independence is a tragedy! Mankind needs God; he is lost, inadequate, and unfulfilled apart from Him. The worst part of an eternal hell is God’s relational absence!

1:29 “a depraved mind” What fallen mankind sees as freedom is self-worship: “Anything and everything for me!” The agent of the PASSIVE VOICE is stated as God in 1:24,26,28, but in this context’s relationship to Genesis 1-3 it is mankind’s choice of knowledge and self which caused the problem. God allowed His creation to suffer the consequences of their own choices, their own independence.

▣ **“being filled with”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. Humans are filled and characterized by what they dwell upon. The rabbis would say that in every human heart is a black (evil *yetzer*) dog and a white (good *yetzer*) dog. The one who is fed the most becomes the largest.

1:29-31 These are the results and symptoms of life without God. They characterize individuals and societies who choose to reject the God of the Bible. This was one of several lists of sins that Paul gave (cf. I Cor. 5:11; 6:9; II Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:31; 5:3-4; Col. 3:5-9).

SPECIAL TOPIC: VICES AND VIRTUES IN THE NT

Lists of both vices and virtues are common in the NT. Often they reflect both rabbinical and cultural (Hellenistic) lists. The NT lists of contrasting characteristics can be seen in:

	<u>Vices</u>	<u>Virtues</u>
1. Paul	Rom. 1:28-32	---
	Rom. 13:13	Rom. 12:9-21
	I Cor. 5:9-11	---
	I Cor. 6:10	I Cor. 6:6-9
	II Cor. 12:20	II Cor. 6:4-10
	Gal. 5:19-21	Gal. 5:22-23
	Eph. 4:25-32	---

	Eph. 5:3-5	---
	---	Phil. 4:8-9
	Col. 3:5,8	Col. 3:12-14
	I Tim. 1:9-10	---
	I Tim. 6:4-5	---
	II Tim. 2:22a,23	II Tim. 2:22b,24
	Titus 1:7, 3:3	Titus 1:8-9; 3:1-2
2. James	James 3:15-16	James 3:17-18
3. Peter	I Pet. 4:3	I Pet. 4:7-11
	II Pet. 1:9	II Pet. 1:5-8
4. John	Rev. 21:8; 22:15	---

1:30 “arrogant” This is *huperēphanous* (see C., 3 below).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL’S USE OF “HUPER” COMPOUNDS

Paul had a special fondness for creating new words using the Greek PREPOSITION *huper*, which basically means “over” or “upper.” When used with the GENITIVE (ABLATIVE) it means “in behalf of.” It can also mean “about” or “concerning,” like *peri* (cf. II Cor. 8:23; II Thess. 2:1. When used with the ACCUSATIVE it means “above,” “over,” or “beyond” (cf. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, pp. 625-633. When Paul wanted to accentuate a concept he used this PREPOSITION in a compound. Following is a list of Paul’s special use of this PREPOSITION in compounds.

A. *apax legomenon* (used only once in the NT)

1. *Huperakmos*, one past the prime of life, I Cor. 7:36
2. *Huperauxanō*, to increase exceedingly, II Thess. 1:3
3. *Huperbainō*, to overstep or transgress, I Thess. 4:6
4. *Huperkeina*, beyond, II Cor. 10:16
5. *Huperekteina*, overextend, II Cor. 10:14
6. *Huperentugchanō*, to intercede, Rom. 8:26
7. *Hupernikaō*, to be abundantly victorious, Rom. 8:37
8. *Huperpleonazō*, to be in exceeding abundance, I Tim. 1:14
9. *Huperupsoō*, to exalt supremely, Phil. 2:9
10. *Huperphroneō*, to have lofty thoughts, Rom. 12:3

B. Words used only in Paul’s writings.

1. *Huperairomai*, to exalt oneself, II Cor. 12:7; II Thess. 2:4
2. *Huperballontōs*, above measure, exceedingly, II Cor. 11:23; (ADVERB only here, but VERB in II Cor. 3:10; 9:14; Eph. 1:19; 2:7; 3:19)

3. *Huperbolē*, an overshooting, an extraordinary armoring, Rom. 7:13; I Cor. 12:31; II Cor. 1:8; 4:7,17; 22:7; Gal. 1:13
4. *Huperekperissou*, beyond all measure, Eph. 3:20; I Thess. 3:10; 5:13
5. *Huperlian*, in the highest degree or pre-eminently, II cor. 11:5; 12:11
6. *Huperochē*, prominence, excellence, I Cor. 2:1; I Tim. 2:2
7. *Huperperisseuō*, to super abound, Rom. 5:20 (MIDDLE VOICE, to be abundantly filled, overflowing, II Cor. 7:4)

C. Words used by Paul and rarely in other NT writers

1. *Huperanō*, far above, Eph. 1:21; 4:10; and Heb. 9:5
2. *Huperechō*, excellence, pre-eminence, Rom. 13:1; Phil. 2:3; 3:8; 4:7; I Pet. 2:13
3. *Huperēphanos*, assuming or haughty, Rom. 1:30; II Tim. 3:2 and Luke 1:51; James 4:6; I Pet. 5:5.

Paul was a man of great passion; when things or people were good, they were very good and when they were bad, they were very bad. This PREPOSITION allowed him to express his superlative feelings about sin, self, and Christ and the Gospel.

1:32 “those who practice such things are worthy of death” This statement reflects the Law of Moses. It is summarized in Rom. 6:16,21,23; 8:6,13. Death is the opposite of God’s will and God’s life (cf. Ezek. 18:32; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9).

▣ **“but also give hearty approval to those who practice them”** Misery loves company. Fallen mankind uses the sins of others as an excuse, “everyone is doing it.” Cultures are characterized by their particular sins!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Paul write to the Roman church?
2. Why was Romans such an important theological statement of Christianity?
3. Outline 1:18-3:20 in your own words.
4. Will those who have never heard the Gospel be rejected for not trusting Christ?
5. Explain the difference between “natural revelation” and “special revelation.”
6. Describe human life without God.
7. Do verses 24-27 address the issue of homosexuality?

ROMANS 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Righteous Judgment of God	God's Righteous Judgment	Jews Under Judgment	God's Judgment	The Jews are Not Exempt From the Retribution of God
2:1-16	2:1-16	2:1-11	2:1-16	2:1-11
The Jews and the Law	The Jews Guilty as the Gentiles	Basis For Judgment	The Jews and the Law (2:17-3:8)	The Law Will Not Save Them
2:17-3:8	2:17-24	2:12-16 2:17-24	2:17-24	2:12-16 2:17-24
	Circumcision of No Avail			Circumcision Will Not Save Them
	2:25-29	2:25-29	2:25-29	2:25-29

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS ON ROMANS 2:1-3:20

- A. Chapters 2 and 3 complete the literary unit started in 1:18. This section deals with:
 1. the lostness of all mankind
 2. God's judgment on sin
 3. mankind's need for God's righteousness through Christ by means of personal faith and repentance
- B. In chapter 2 there are seven principles concerning God's judgment
 1. verse 2, according to the truth
 2. verse 5, accumulated guilt

3. verses 6 and 7, according to works
 4. verse 11, no respecter of persons
 5. verse 13, lifestyle
 6. verse 16, the secrets of men's hearts
 7. verses 17-29, no special national groups
- C. There is much discussion among commentators about who was being addressed in chapter 2:1-17. It is obvious that 2:12-29 deals with the Jews. Verses 1-17 serve the dual purpose of speaking both to moral pagans like Seneca (societal norms) and to the Jewish nation (Mosaic Law).
- D. In 1:18-21, Paul asserted that humans can know God through creation. In 2:14-15, Paul also asserted that all humans have an inner moral conscience given by God. These two witnesses, creation and conscience, are the basis for God's condemnation of all mankind, even those who have not been exposed to the OT or the gospel message. Humans are responsible because they have not lived up to the best light they have had.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-11

¹Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ²And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. ³But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: ⁷to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. ⁹*There will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, ¹⁰but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹For there is no partiality with God.

2:1

NASB “you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment”
NKJV “you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge”
NRSV “you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others”
TEV “You have no excuse at all, whoever you are. For then you judge others”
NJB “So no matter who you are, if you pass judgment you have no excuse.”

This is literally “no legal defense” (cf. 1:20). It was placed first in the Greek sentence to magnify its significance. Verses 1-16 seem to relate both to the self-righteous Jewish legalists and the Greek moralists. By their judging others they condemn themselves.

This same phrase is used in 1:20, but the PRONOUN is “they”; here “you.” Obviously Paul is addressing different groupings of sinners/rebels. Of one of the groups he was once a zealous member! There are two problems.

1. rejecting and perverting the knowledge of God
2. turning it into a set of rules and becoming judgmental and self righteous

Also note that the “they” of chapter 1 becomes “you” in 2:1-8. It is universalized from Jews and Greeks into “every soul of man” in 2:9-11. Though there are different groups (either two or three groups) in the end it makes no difference, all are under judgment (cf. 3:23).

2:2 “we know” This PRONOUN probably referred to fellow Jews although it could possibly refer to Christians. In vv. 2-4, Paul returns to his common technique of a question and answer format, called diatribe (i.e., vv. 1-11,17-29), which was a presentation of truth by means of a supposed objector. It was also used by Habakkuk, Malachi, and the rabbis, as well as the Greek philosophers (such as Socrates and the Stoics).

The phrase “we know that” is used several times in Romans (cf. 2:2; 3:19; 7:14; 8:22,28). Paul assumes his hearers have some degree of knowledge, unlike the immoral pagans of chapter 1.

▣ **“the judgment of God”** The Bible is clear on this truth. All humans will give an account to God for the gift of life (cf. vv. 5-9; Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15). Even Christians will stand before Christ (cf. 14:10-12; II Cor. 5:10).

2:3 The grammatical form of Paul’s rhetorical question expects a “no” answer.

▣ **“do you suppose”** This is the Greek VERB *logizomai*. Paul uses it often (Rom. 2:3,26; 3:28; 4:3,4,5,6, 8,9,10,11,22,23,24; 6:11; 8:18,36; 9:8; 14:14; Gal. 3:6, ten times in I and II Corinthians, and twice in Philippians). See notes at 4:3 and 8:18.

▣ **“O man”** This matches the same idiom in v. 1. In 9:20 it refers to Jews.

2:4 This is also a question in Greek.

▣

NASB “think lightly of”

NKJV, NRSV,

TEV, REB “despise”

NJB “disregarding”

NIV “show contempt”

NET “have contempt for”

By comparing English translations interpreters get a feel for the semantic range of the VERB. This is a strong term for willing rejection. See its use in

1. Jesus’ words, Matt. 6:24; 18:10
2. Paul, I Cor. 11:22; I Tim. 4:12; 6:2
3. Hebrews (of Jesus), 12:2
4. Peter, II Peter 2:10
5. the NOUN in Acts 13:41

▣ **“the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience”** Humans have often misunderstood God’s grace, mercy, and patience and have turned them into an opportunity to sin instead of to repent (cf. II Pet. 3:9).

Paul often describes the attributes of God as “the riches of” (cf. 9:23; 11:33; Col. 1:27; Eph. 1:7,18; 2:4,7; 3:8,16; Phil. 4:19).

The noun “forbearance” is used only twice in the NT, both times by Paul in this literary unit (1:18-3:31), here and 3:26. Both referring to God’s patience with sinners.

▣ **“leads you to repentance”** Repentance is crucial for a faith-covenant relationship with God (cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15; 6:12; Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 3:16,19; 20:21). The term in Hebrew meant a change of actions, while in Greek it meant a change of mind. Repentance is a willingness to change from one’s self-centered existence to a life informed and directed by God. It calls for a turning from the priority and bondage of self. Basically it is a new attitude, a new worldview, a new master. Repentance is God’s will for every fallen child of Adam, made in His image (cf. Ezek. 18:21,23,32 and II Pet. 3:9).

The NT passage which best reflects the different Greek terms for repentance is II Cor. 7:8-11.

1. *lupeō*, “grief” or “sorrow” in vv. 8 (twice), 9 (thrice), 10 (twice), 11
2. *metamelomai*, “regret” or “after care,” in vv. 8 (twice), 9
3. *metanoia*, “repentance,” or “after mind,” in vv. 9, 10

The contrast is false repentance (*metamelomai*) (cf. Judas, Matt. 27:3 and Esau, Heb. 12:16-17) versus true repentance (*metanoēō*).

True repentance is theologically linked to

1. Jesus’ preaching on the conditions of the New Covenant (cf. Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3,5)
2. the apostolic sermons in Acts (*kerygma*, cf. Acts 3:16,19; 20:21)
3. God’s sovereign gift (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18 and II Tim. 2:25)
4. perishing (cf. II Pet. 3:9)

Repentance is not optional!

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE

Repentance (along with faith) is a covenant requirement of both the Old Covenant (*Nacham*, BDB 636, e.g., 13:12; 32:12,14; *Shuv*, BDB 996, e.g., I Kgs. 8:47; Ezek. 14:6; 18:30) and the New Covenant.

1. John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3,8)
2. Jesus (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3)
3. Peter (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 11:18; II Pet. 3:9)
4. Paul (Acts 13:24; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; II Cor. 2:9-10)

But what is repentance? Is it sorrow? Is it a cessation of sin? The best chapter in the NT for understanding the different connotations of this concept is II Corinthians 7:8-11, where three related, but different, Greek terms are used.

1. “sorrow” (*lupeō*, cf. vv. 8 [twice], 9 [thrice], 10 [twice], 11). It means grief or distress and has a theologically neutral connotation.
2. “repentance” (*metanoēō*, cf. vv. 9,10). It is a compound of “after” and “mind,” which implies a new mind, a new way of thinking, a new attitude toward life and God. This is true repentance.
3. “regret” (*metamelomai*, cf. vv. 8[twice], 10). It is a compound of “after” and “care.” It is used of Judas in Matt. 27:3 and Esau in Heb. 12:16-17. It implies sorrow over the consequences, not over the acts.

Repentance and faith are the required covenant acts (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38,41; 3:16,19; 20:21). There are some texts which imply that God gives repentance (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18; II Tim. 2:25). But most of the texts see this as a necessary human covenantal response to God’s offer of a free salvation.

The definitions of both the Hebrew and Greek terms are required to grasp the full meaning of repentance. The Hebrew demands “a change of action,” while the Greek demands “a change of mind.” The saved person receives a new mind and heart. He thinks differently and lives differently. Instead of “What’s in it for me?” the question is now “What is God’s will?” Repentance is not an emotion that fades or a total sinlessness, but a new relationship with the Holy One that transforms the believer progressively into a holy one.

2:5-9 These verses describe (1) the stubbornness of fallen mankind and (2) God’s anger and judgment.

2:5 “stubbornness” This NOUN is found only here in the NT. Israel is described in this same way in Exod. 32:9; 33:3,5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6,13,27 (also note Heb. 3:8,15; 4:7).

▣ **“heart”** See Special Topic at 1:24.

▣ **“in the day of wrath”** This was called “The Day of the Lord” in the OT (cf. Joel, Amos). This is the concept of Judgment Day, or for believers, Resurrection Day. Mankind will give an account to God for His gift of life (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15).

Notice that it is the sinners themselves (“you” and “yourself”) that store up wrath. God simply, at some point, allows this stored wrath to become evident and run its full course.

Wrath, like all human words to describe God, are only analogously (anthropomorphically, see Special Topic at 1:18) applied to deity! God is eternal, holy, and Spirit. Humans are finite, sinful, and corporeal. God is not emotionally angry, as in a rage. The Bible presents Him as loving sinners and wanting them to repent, but also as having a settled opposition to human rebellion. God is personal; He takes sin personally and we are personally responsible for our sin.

One additional thought about the wrath of God. In the Bible it is both in time (temporal, cf. 1:24,26,28) and at the end of time (eschatological, cf. 2:5-8). The Day of the Lord (Judgment Day) was one way the OT prophets warned Israel to repent at the present time so that their future would be blessed, not judged (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28). The OT prophets often took a crisis of their day and projected it into the end-time future.

2:6 This is a quote from Ps. 62:12 (cf. Matt. 16:27). It is a universal principle (see note at 2:1, 2nd paragraph) that humans are responsible for their actions and will give an account to God (cf. Job 34:11; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12). Even believers will give an account of their lives and service to Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:10). Believers are not saved by works but are saved unto works (cf. Eph. 2:8-10 [esp. 2:14-26]; James and I John). A changed and changing life of love, service, and selflessness is evidence of true salvation.

2:7 “to those who” There is a contrast between the persons described in v. 7 and those in v. 8 (“but to those who”).

▣

NASB “to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality; eternal life”

NKJV “eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality”

NRSV “to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life”

TEV “Some men keep on doing good, and seek glory, honor and immortal life; to them God will give eternal life”

NJB “For those who sought renown and honor and immortality by always doing good there will be eternal life”

This referred to people like Cornelius (cf. Acts 10:34-35). This passage may sound like works righteousness (obtaining righteousness through human effort), but that would go against the major theme of the book of Romans. Remember that either vv. 1-16 or vv. 1-11 are a paragraph. The theological point

of the whole is that God is no respecter of persons (v.11) and that all have sinned (v. 12). If people lived up to the light they had (natural revelation for the Gentiles, special revelation for the Jews, cf. 10:5) then they would be right with God. However, the summary of 3:9-18,23 shows that none ever have, nor can they!

A believer's changed godly life is seen as confirming and validating his initial faith response. A changed life is the evidence of the indwelling Spirit of God (cf. vv.10,13; Matt. 7; Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:14-26 and I John). See Special Topic: The Need to Persevere at 8:25.

▣ **“eternal life”** This is a characteristic phrase of John's writings and is used sparingly in the Synoptic Gospels. Paul seems to derive the phrase from Dan. 12:2 (cf. Titus 1:2; 3:7), where it denotes the life of the new age, life in fellowship with God, resurrection life. He first uses it in Gal. 6:8. It is a common theme in the doctrinal section of Romans (cf. 2:7; 5:21; 6:22,23). It also occurs several times in the Pastoral Epistles (cf. I Tim. 1:16; Titus 1:2; 3:7).

2:8

NASB “those who are selfishly ambitious”

NKJV, NRSV “those who are self-seeking”

TEV “other people are selfish”

NJB “those who out of jealousy”

The term originally meant “work for hire” (cf. Tob. 2:11).

Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, p. 104, list two usages of this term.

1. “selfish ambition,” using Rom. 2:8 noting “wanting to be better than someone else,” which fits this context
2. “hostility,” using Phil. 1:17 noting “rivalry” as a translation option (see also II Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Phil. 2:3; James 3:14,16)

▣ **“and do not obey the truth,”** The term “truth” (*aletheia*) was used in its Hebrew sense (*emeth*) of truthfulness and trustworthiness. In this context, it had a moral, not intellectual, focus. See Special Topic: Truth in Paul's Writings at 1:18.

2:9 “for every soul of man” Paul used the Greek term *pas* translated “all” or “every” so often in these opening chapters of Romans to show the universal implications of both the “bad news” (mankind's lostness and God's no-partiality judgment) and the “good news” (God's offer of free salvation and complete forgiveness in Christ to all who repent and believe).

This context strongly implies a universal judgment and its resulting consequences. This truth demands a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked (cf. Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15).

If verses 6-11 are a chiasma, then vv. 8-9 are the key verses which denote judgment or evil doers.

2:9-10 “the Jew first” This is repeated for emphasis. The Jew was first in opportunity because they had God's revelation (cf. 1:16; Matt. 10:6; 15:24; John 4:22; Acts 3:26; 13:46), but also first in judgment (cf. 9-11) because they had God's Revelation (cf. 9:4-5).

2:11

NASB, NKJV “for there is no partiality with God”

NRSV “For God shows no partiality”

TEV “For God judges everyone by the same standard”

NJB “There is no favoritism with God”

Literally this is “to lift the face,” which was a metaphor from the judicial system of the OT (cf. Lev. 19:15; Deut. 10:17; II Chr. 19:7; Acts 10:34; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; I Peter 1:17). If a judge saw to whom

he was administering justice there was a chance of bias. Therefore, he was not to lift the face of the one who stood before him.

SPECIAL TOPIC: RACISM

- I. Introduction
 - A. This is a universal expression by fallen mankind within his society. This is mankind's ego, supporting itself on the backs of others. Racism is, in many ways, a modern phenomena, while nationalism (or tribalism) is a more ancient expression.
 - B. Nationalism began at Babel (Genesis 11) and which was originally related to Noah's three sons from which the so called races developed (Genesis 10). However, it is obvious from Scripture that humanity is from one source (cf. Genesis 1-3; Acts 17:24-26).
 - C. Racism is just one of many prejudices. Some others are (1) educational snobbery; (2) socio-economic arrogance; (3) self-righteous religious legalism; and (4) dogmatic political affiliations.
- II. Biblical Material
 - A. Old Testament
 1. Gen. 1:27 – Mankind, male and female, were made in the image and likeness of God, which makes them unique. It also shows their individual worth and dignity (cf. John 3:16).
 2. Gen. 1:11-25 – Records the phrase, “. . .after their own kind. . .” ten times. This has been used to support racial segregation. However, it is obvious from the context that this refers to animals and plants and not to humanity.
 3. Gen. 9:18-27 – This has been used to support racial dominance. It must be remembered that God did not curse Canaan. Noah, his grandfather, cursed him after awakening from a drunken stupor. The Bible never records that God confirmed this oath/curse. Even if He did, this does not affect the black race. Canaan was the father of those who inhabited Palestine and the Egyptian wall art shows they were not black.
 4. Joshua 9:23 – This has been used to prove one race will serve another. However, in context, the Gibeonites are of the same racial stock as the Jews.
 5. Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 13 – These have often been used in a racial sense, but the context shows that the marriages were condemned, not because of race (they were from the same son of Noah, Genesis 10), but for religious reasons.
 - B. New Testament
 1. The Gospels
 - a. Jesus made use of the hatred between the Jews and Samaritans on several instances, which shows that racial hatred is inappropriate.
 - (1) the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
 - (2) the woman at the well (John 4)
 - (3) the thankful leper (Luke 17:7-19)
 - b. The Gospel is for all humanity
 - (1) John 3:16
 - (2) Luke 24:46-47
 - (3) Hebrews 2:9
 - (4) Revelation 14:6
 - c. The Kingdom will include all humanity
 - (1) Luke 13:29

(2) Revelation 5

2. Acts

- a. Acts 10 is a definitive passage on God's universal love and the gospel's universal message.
- b. Peter was attacked for his actions in Acts 11 and this problem was not resolved until the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 met and came to a solution. The tension between first century Jews and Gentiles was very intense.

3. Paul

- a. There are no barriers in Christ
 - (1) Gal. 3:26-28
 - (2) Eph. 2:11-22
 - (3) Col. 3:11
- b. God is no respecter of persons
 - (1) Rom. 2:11
 - (2) Eph. 6:9

4. Peter and James

- a. God is no respecter of persons, I Pet. 1:17
- b. Because God does not show partiality, then neither should His people, James 2:1

5. John

- a. One of the strongest statements on the responsibility of believers is found in I John 4:20

III. Conclusion

- A. Racism, or for that matter, prejudice of any kind, is totally inappropriate for God's children. Here is a quote from Henlee Barnette, who spoke at a forum at Glorieta, New Mexico, for the Christian Life Commission in 1964.

“Racism is heretical because it is unbiblical and unchristian, not to mention unscientific.”

- B. This problem gives Christians the opportunity to show their Christlike love, forgiveness and understanding to a lost world. Christian refusal in this area shows immaturity and is an opportunity for the evil one to retard the believer's faith, assurance, and growth. It will also act as a barrier to lost people coming to Christ.

- C. What can I do? (This section is taken from a Christian Life Commission tract entitled “Race Relations”

“ON THE PERSONAL LEVEL”

- ★ Accept your own responsibility in solving the problems associated with race.
- ★ Through prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with those of other races, strive to rid your life of racial prejudice.
- ★ Express your convictions about race, particularly where those who stir up race hatred are unchallenged.

“IN FAMILY LIFE”

- ★ Recognize the importance of family influence in the development of attitudes toward other races.
- ★ Seek to develop Christian attitudes by talking over what children and parents hear about the race issue outside the home.

- ★ Parents should be careful to set a Christian example in relating to people of other races.
- ★ Seek opportunities to make family friendships across racial lines.

“IN YOUR CHURCH”

- ★ By the preaching and teaching of biblical truth relating to race, the congregation can be motivated to set an example for the entire community.
- ★ Be sure that worship, fellowship, and service through the church is open to all, even as the NT churches observed no racial barriers (Eph. 2:11-22; Gal. 3:26-29).

“IN DAILY LIFE”

- ★ Help to overcome all racial discrimination in the world of work.
- ★ Work through community organizations of all kinds to secure equal rights and opportunities, remembering that it is the race problem which should be attacked, not people. The aim is to promote understanding, not to create bitterness.
- ★ If it seems wise, organize a special committee of concerned citizens for the purpose of opening lines of communication in the community for education of the general public and for specific actions in improving race relations.
- ★ Support legislation and legislators in the passing of laws promoting racial justice and oppose those who exploit prejudice for political gain.
- ★ Commend law enforcement officials for enforcing the laws without discrimination.
- ★ Shun violence, and promote respect for the law, doing everything possible as a Christian citizen to make sure that legal structures do not become tools in the hands of those who would promote discrimination.
- ★ Exemplify the spirit and mind of Christ in all human relationship.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:12-16

¹²For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; ¹³for *it is* not the hearers of the Law *who* are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. ¹⁴For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, ¹⁶on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

2:12 “for all who have sinned without the Law” God will hold all humans responsible even if they have never been exposed to the OT or the gospel. All people have some knowledge of God from creation (cf. 1:19-20; Ps. 19:1-6), and an innate moral sense, (cf. 2:14-15). The tragedy is that all have willfully violated the light they have (cf. 1:21-23; 3:9,19,23; 11:32; Gal. 3:22).

▣ **“the Law”** There is no ARTICLE with the term “law.” This grammatical structure usually emphasized the quality of the NOUN. However, in Romans Paul uses “the law” to refer to several different things.

1. Roman Law
2. Mosaic Law
3. the concept of human societal mores in general

Context, not the ARTICLE, must reveal which one. This context emphasized that all humans have some knowledge of God’s natural revelation of Himself in their hearts (cf. v. 15).

2:13 “for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God” The term “hearers” can refer to (1) rabbinical usage which had a specialized sense of rabbinical students of the Torah or (2) those who heard the Scriptures read in synagogue. Remember the writers of the NT were Hebrew thinkers writing in Koine Greek. Therefore, word analysis must begin with the Septuagint, not a Greek lexicon.

The term “just” or “justified” (*dikē* in all its forms) is a crucial term in Paul’s theology (cf. 3:4, 20,24,26,28,30; 4:2,5; 5:1,9; 6:7; 8:30,33). The words “just,” “justify,” “justification,” “right,” and “righteousness” are all derived from *dikaios*. See Special Topic: Righteousness at 1:17. In Hebrew (*tsadag*, BDB 843) it originally referred to a long straight reed (15 to 20 feet) which was used to measure things, such as walls or fences, for plumb. It came to be used metaphorically of God as the standard of judgment.

In Paul’s writings the term had two foci. First, God’s own righteousness is given to sinful mankind as a free gift through faith in Christ. This is often called imputed righteousness or forensic righteousness. It refers to one’s legal standing before a righteous God. This is the origin of Paul’s famous “justification by grace through faith” theme.

Second, God’s activity of restoring sinful mankind into His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), or to put it another way, to bring about Christlikeness. This verse—like Matt. 7:24; Luke 8:21 and 11:28; John 13:17; James 1:22-23,25—urges believers to be doers not just hearers. Imputed righteousness (justification) must result in righteous living (sanctification). God forgives and changes sinners! Paul’s usage was both legal and ethical. The New Covenant gives humans a legal standing but also demands a godly lifestyle. It is free, but costly.

▣ **“but doers of the Law”** God demands a new obedient lifestyle (cf. Lev. 18:5; Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 8:21; 11:28; John 13:17; James 1:22-25; 2:14-28). In many ways this concept mimics the Hebrew term *shema* (BDB 1033), which meant to hear so as to do (cf. Deut. 5:1; 6:4; 9:1; 20:3; 27:9-10).

2:14

NASB “For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves”

NKJV “for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves”

NRSV “When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves”

TEV “The Gentiles do not have the Law, but whenever of their own free will they do what the Law commands, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the Law”

NJB “For instance, pagans who never heard of the Law but are led by reason to do what the Law commands, may not actually ‘possess’ the Law, but, they can be said to ‘be’ the Law”

All cultures have an inner moral law, a societal norm. They are responsible for the light they have (cf. I Cor. 9:21). This verse was not meant to imply that they can be right with God if they live in light of their culture, but that they are responsible for their innate knowledge of God.

2:15 “their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them” There is an inner moral voice. But only Scripture, enlightened by the Spirit, can be fully trusted. Fallenness has affected our conscience. However, creation (1:18-20) and this inner, moral law (2:14-15) are all the knowledge of God that some humans possess. There was no Hebrew term that was equivalent to the Greek word for “conscience” (*syneidesis*). The Greek concept of an inner moral sense of right and wrong was often discussed by the Stoic philosophers. Paul was familiar with the Greek philosophers (he quotes Cleanthes in Acts 17:28; Menander in I Cor. 15:33; and Epimenides in Titus 1:12) from his early education in Tarsus. His hometown was known for its excellent schools of Greek rhetoric and philosophy.

2:16 “on the day” See note at 2:5.

☐ **“according to my gospel”** In context this referred to Paul’s preaching of the revelation of Jesus Christ. The PRONOUN “my” reflected Paul’s understanding of the stewardship of the gospel that had been entrusted to him (cf. 16:25; I Cor. 15:1; Gal. 1:11; I Tim. 1:11; II Tim. 2:8). It was not uniquely his, but as the Apostle to the Gentiles he felt an awesome sense of responsibility for spreading the truth about Jesus in the Greco-Roman world.

☐ **“God will judge the secrets of men”** God knows the hearts of all people (cf. I Sam. 2:7; 16:7; I Kgs. 8:39; I Chr. 28:9; II Chr. 6:30; Ps. 7:9; 44:21; 139:1-6; Pro. 15:11; 21:2; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; 20:12; Luke 15:16; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom. 8:27; Rev. 2:23). The Father, through the agency of the Son, will bring both motive and action into judicial review (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15).

☐ **“through Christ Jesus”** Jesus did not come to act as judge (cf. John 3:17-21). He came to reveal God the Father, die a substitutionary death, and to give believers an example to follow. When people reject Jesus they judge themselves.

However, the NT also teaches that Jesus will act as the Father’s representative in judgment (cf. John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; II Tim. 4:1). The tension between Jesus as Judge and/or Savior can be seen in John’s Gospel (cf. 3:17-21 versus 9:39).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:17-24

¹⁷But if you bear the name “Jew” and rely upon the Law and boast in God, ¹⁸and know *His* will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, ¹⁹and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, ²¹you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? ²²You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? ²⁴For “THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,” just as it is written.

2:17 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s point of view or for his literary purposes. This condition extends to v. 20 but has no conclusion, therefore, TEV translates them as assumed affirmations which Jesus would make. The Jews were trusting in their lineage, traditions, and performance to provide salvation (cf. Matt. 3:9; John 8:33,37,39).

☐ **“boast in God”** Many Jews were relying on (1) their racial lineage to Abraham and (2) their personal performance of the Mosaic Law as the means of being accepted by God. However, their self-righteous legalism separated them from God (cf. Matt. 5:20; Gal. 3). What tragic irony!

Paul develops the idea of boasting in I Corinthians. Paul faced an arrogant Israel and an arrogant Greek intellectualism. The bottom line is no flesh will glory before God.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING

These Greek terms, *kauchaomai*, *kauchēma*, and *kauchēsis*, are used about thirty five times by Paul and only twice in the rest of the NT (both in James). Its predominate use is in I and II Corinthians.

There are two main truths connected to boasting.

- ★ no flesh shall glory/boast before God (cf. I Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9)
- ★ believers should glory in the Lord (cf. I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17, which is an allusion to Jer. 9:23-24)

Therefore, there is appropriate and inappropriate boasting/glorying (i.e., pride).

A. appropriate

1. in the hope of glory (cf. Rom. 4:2)
2. in God through the Lord Jesus (cf. Rom. 5:11)
3. in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., Paul's main theme, cf. I Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 6:14)
4. Paul boasts in
 - a. his ministry without compensation (cf. I Cor. 9:15,16; II Cor. 10:12)
 - b. his authority from Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:8,12)
 - c. his not boasting in other men's labor (as some at Corinth were, cf. II Cor. 10:15)
 - d. his racial heritage (as others were doing at Corinth, cf. II Cor. 11:17; 12:1,5,6)
 - e. his churches
 - (1) Corinth (II Cor. 7:4,14; 8:24; 9:2; 11:10)
 - (2) Thessalonika (cf. II Thess. 1:4)
 - (3) his confidence in God's comfort and deliverance (cf. II Cor. 1:12)

B. inappropriate

1. in relation to Jewish heritage (cf. Rom. 2:17,23; 3:27; Gal. 6:13)
2. some in the Corinthian church were boasting
 - a. in men (cf. I Cor. 3:21)
 - b. in wisdom (cf. I Cor. 4:7)
 - c. in freedom (cf. I Cor. 5:6)
3. false teachers tried to boast in the church at Corinth (cf. II Cor. 11:12)

2:18 “approve” This is the Greek VERB *dokimazō* in its PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE form. See Special Topic on Testing following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR TESTING AND THEIR CONNOTATIONS

There are two Greek terms which have the idea of testing someone for a purpose.

1. *Dokimazō, Dokimion, Dokimasia*

This term is a metallurgist term for testing the genuineness of something i.e., metaphorically someone) by fire. The fire reveals the true metal and burns off (i.e., purifies) the dross. This physical process became a powerful idiom for God and/or Satan and/or humans testing others. This term is only used in a positive sense of testing with a view towards acceptance.

It is used in the NT of testing

- a. oxen – Luke 14:19
- b. ourselves – I Cor. 11:28

- c. our faith – James. 1:3
- d. even God – Heb. 3:9

The outcomes of these tests were assumed to be positive (cf. Rom. 1:28; 14:22; 16:10; II Cor. 10:18; 13:3; Phil. 2:27; I Pet. 1:7), therefore, the term conveys the idea of someone examined and proved

- a. to be worthwhile
- b. to be good
- c. to be genuine
- d. to be valuable
- e. to be honored

2. *Peirazō, Peirasmus*

This term often has the connotation of examination for the purpose of fault finding or rejection. It is often used in connection to Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.

- a. It conveys the attempt to trap Jesus (cf. Matt. 4:1; 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:38; Heb. 2:18).
- b. This term (*peirazōn*) is used as a title for Satan in Matt. 4:3; I Thess. 3:5.
- c. It is used by Jesus warning us not to test God (cf. Matt. 14:7; Luke 4:12) [or Christ cf. I Cor 10:9]. It also denotes the attempt to do something that has failed (cf. Acts 9:20; 20:21; Heb.11:29). It is used in connection with the temptation and trials of believers (cf. I Cor. 7:5; 10:9, 13; Gal. 6:1; I Thess. 3:5; Heb. 2:18; James. 1:2, 13, 14; I Pet. 4:12; II Pet 2:9). God allows the three enemies of mankind (i.e., the world, the flesh, and the devil) to manifest in a specific time and place.

▣ **“the Law”** Verses 17ff. deal with the Jewish people, therefore, the term “the Law” must refer in this context to the Mosaic Law. This is confirmed by v. 25 which deals with circumcision.

2:18-20 The Jewish leaders believed their way (their sect of Judaism) was the right way, the only way to God. They were confident that they were the true teachers about religious matters (cf. Matt. 15:14). Privilege brings responsibility (cf. Luke 12:48).

Notice the parallel phrases related to their confidence (cf. Matt. 15:14; 23:16,24; Luke 6:39).

- 1. a guide to the blind, v. 19
- 2. a light to those in darkness, v. 19
- 3. a corrector of the foolish, v. 20
- 4. a teacher of the immature, v. 20
- 5. having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, v. 20

2:21-24 If one trusts in personal obedience, then that obedience must be complete (cf. Matt. 5:20,48; Gal. 3:10, which is a quote from Deut. 27:26, and James 2:10). This is an impossibility for fallen mankind. Paul asks poses rhetorical questions to his Jewish readers/hearers in vv. 21-23.

2:22 It is difficult to know to what Paul was referring in vv. 22-23. Since the description does not fit most Jews of Paul's day it is possible that these sins are used in a spiritual sense similar to how Jesus interpreted the Law in Matt. 5:20-48. George Ladd in *A Theology of the New Testament*, says “Paul must be referring to robbing God of the honor due him, spiritual adultery, and profaning the devotion due God alone by exalting themselves as judge and lord over their fellow creatures.” p. 505.

2:22 “abhor idols” The turning away from something because of stench is the root meaning of this term.

☐ **“do you rob temples”** It is uncertain historically to what this referred but it was somehow related to idolatry.

2:23 “boast” See Special Topic: Boasting at 2:17.

2:24 This is a quote from Isaiah 52:5 in the Septuagint. God’s blessing of Israel for covenant keeping (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28) was meant to be a witness to the world. However, Israel never kept the covenant, therefore, the world saw only the judgment of God (cf. Ezek. 36:22-32). Israel was to be a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:5-6), to bring all the world to faith in YHWH (cf. Gen. 12:3; Eph. 2:11-3:13). See Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 1:5.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:25-29

²⁵For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? ²⁸For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. ²Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

2:25 “circumcision” Paul is still using diatribe. Someone will raise the statement that, well at least we are circumcised (cf. Gen. 17:10-11). We are in the line of Abraham. Paul plainly and boldly dismantles this cherished Jewish claim (cf. Matt. 3:7-10; John 8:31-59).

All of Israel’s neighbors except the Philistines were circumcised. It was not the act itself that was significant; it was the continuing faith of the recipient (cf. vv. 26-27; Deut. 10:16; 30:6). This is true of all religious rituals. Religious people often want the blessings of God’s covenant but without the responsibilities.

2:25-26 “if...if...if” These are three THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which refer to possible future action. Obedience (cf. Deut. 27-30) is the key in Paul’s argument in chapter 2, but not in 3:21-31 (cf. Gal. 3). Obedience is the result of salvation but grace is the basis (cf. Eph. 2:8-10).

2:26-27 These verses hold out hope that some Gentiles have responded to the light they have (grammar expects a “yes” answer in v. 26). The only possible biblical example of this would be Cornelius of Acts 10. Yet he does not quite fit this verse because he was a God-fearer and worshiped at the local synagogue.

These verses are in reality a counterpoint to Paul’s argument about the need of salvation for the Jews. Romans 3:23 is the summary that all humans are spiritually lost without Christ. If there are Gentiles who live up to the light they have from creation and an inner moral sensitivity, God will provide an opportunity for them to respond to Christ— somehow, someway, sometime.

2:28-29 “For he is not a Jew. . .he is a Jew” This is an extremely important discussion because some modern theological groups attempt to separate or capsulize the OT people of God from the NT people of God. There is only one covenant and one people (cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 3:7-9, 29; 6:16; I Pet. 3:6). The new

covenant is a development and fulfillment of the old. The people of God have always been so by faith, not lineage. They are a “heart people” not ritual or racial people. Faith, not the parent, is the key. Covenant mind, not covenant sign, is the mark.

▣ **“flesh”** See Special Topic at 1:3.

2:29 The covenant sign of circumcision (cf. Gen. 17:14) was a metaphor in the OT for one’s openness to God. It developed metaphorically in several ways

1. heart circumcision (cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:24-25)
2. ear circumcision (cf. Jer. 6:10)
3. lip circumcision (cf. Exod. 6:12,30)

The Law was never meant to be an external code, but a life transforming daily relationship with YHWH that revealed His character and promises to all the children of Adam. See Special Topic: Paul’s Views of the Law at 13:9.

▣

NASB “that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter”

NKJV “that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter”

NRSV “a matter of the heart -- it is spiritual and not literal”

TEV “which is the work of God’s Spirit, not of the written Law”

NJB “in the heart — something not of the letter but of the spirit”

This phrase is ambiguous in Greek. Some translations take it to refer to the spiritual versus the literal (cf. NRSV, the Twentieth Century New Testament, the Knox translation, the Lamsa translation of the Peshitta, the Williams translation and the New Berkeley Version). Other translations see the contrast as between the Holy Spirit (cf. 7:6; II Cor. 3:6, where a similar construction occurs) and the written text (cf. NASB, NKJV, NEB, NIV and TEV). *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 299, gives the suggestion that based on II Cor. 3:6 it was Paul’s metaphorical/literary way of referring to the Old Covenant and the New Covenant; the first characterized by an external code and the second by an internal new mind and new spirit given by the Holy Spirit in the new age of the Spirit.

Paul has been discussing the fact that some Gentiles might act pleasing to God apart from the Law. If this is true then the children of God included more than those who had been only physically circumcised (cf. Galatians). God’s family is wider than racial Jews (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5); Job, Melchizedek, Jethro, Caleb, Rahab, and Ruth were not racially Jewish. Even the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were half Egyptian (cf. Gen. 41:50-52).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How does the Jews' unfaithfulness affect God's promise (3:3-4)?
2. Is there any advantage before God for being Jewish (3:1-8)?
3. What is a diatribe?
4. What is the point of the supposed diatribe in vv. 5-8?
5. Does how one lives really count if justification is by grace through faith apart from works (3:8)?
6. What is the theological concept of total depravity (3:10-18)?
7. What is the purpose of the Mosaic law, or law in general (3:20; Gal. 3:24-25)?
8. Why is Satan not mentioned at all in chapters 1-3 which deal with man's lostness?
9. Are the OT promises conditional or unconditional?
10. What is the purpose of the Mosaic Law in the life of: (1) the non-Jew; and (2) the Jew?
11. Outline in your own words Paul's arguments in 1:18-3:20 paragraph by paragraph.

ROMANS 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Jews and the Law (2:17-3:8)	God's Judgment Defended	The Advantage of the Jews	The Jews and the Law (2:17-3:8)	God's Promises Will Not Save Them
3:1-8	3:1-8	3:1-8	3:1-4 3:5-6 3:7-8	3:1-8
There is None Righteous	All Have Sinned	All are Guilty	No Man is Righteous	All are Guilty
3:9-20	3:9-20	3:9-18 3:19-20	3:9-18 3:19-20	3:9-18 3:19-20
Righteousness Through Faith	God's Righteousness Through Faith	The True Righteousness	How God Put Men Right	The Revelation of God's Judgment
3:21-26	3:21-26	3:21-26	3:21-26	3:21-26
	Boasting Excluded	Boasting is Excluded		What Faith Does
3:27-31	3:27-31	3:27-31	3:27-31	3:27-31

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Verses 1-8 are a related content, but it is difficult to follow Paul's logic because he is using a literary technique called diatribe (a supposed objector).

- B. It seems that Paul is anticipating how some Jewish people will respond to 2:17-29, so he answers their objections (Corley, Vaughan, *Romans*, pp. 37-39).
1. First question. Are there really no advantages for the Jews? (vv. 1-2)
 2. Second question. Has God's word failed because some Jews were unfaithful? (vv. 3-4)
 3. Third question. If God used the Jews to reveal His character are the Jews still judicially responsible? (vv. 5-8)
- C. The conclusion goes back to 2:11. There is no favoritism with God. All humans are accountable for living apart from the light they have (natural revelation and/or special revelation).
- D. Verses 9-18 contain a series of OT quotes which declare the sins of the Jews.
- E. Verses 19-20 sum up the spiritual condition of Israel and the purpose of the OT (cf. Galatians 3).
- F. Verses 21-31 are the summary of 1:18-3:20. They are the first theological point of the gospel (see brief outline, p. 2).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-8

¹Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? ²Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? ⁴May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar, as it is written, "THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS, AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED." ⁵But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) ⁶May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? ⁷But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? ⁸And why not *say* (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just.

3:1 "what advantage has the Jew" Paul is continuing to use the literary technique of diatribe, or a supposed objector, to communicate his message. For a listing of the privileges of the Jewish people, see 3:2 and 9:4-5. Paul develops this paragraph in chapters 9-11.

3:2 "First of all" Paul uses "first" in 1:8, but without a second item being mentioned. He does the same here. Paul's writing was so intense, as well as being dictated, that often his grammatical constructions are incomplete.

▣ **"they were entrusted with the oracles of God"** Having God's revelation is an awesome responsibility as well as a tremendous privilege (cf. 9:4-5). They were stewards of God's gift (AORIST PASSIVE, cf. I Thess. 2:4).

The word *logion* (oracles) is used in the Septuagint for the word from God (cf. Num. 24:4,16; Deut. 33:9; Ps. 107:11; 119:67; Isa. 5:24; 28:13), which would denote the OT. It is consistently used in this same sense in the NT (cf. Acts 7:38; Heb. 5:12; I Pet. 4:11).

3:3 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Verses 5 and 7 are also FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES.

The grammar of v. 3 expects a “no” answer.



NASB, NKJV “some did not believe”

NRSV, NJB “some were unfaithful”

TEV “what if some of them were unfaithful”

This may refer either to individual Israelite’s (1) unfaithfulness or (2) lack of personal faith in YHWH. It is difficult to relate intellectually to the unconditional promises of God (i.e., redemption of a fallen mankind) and the conditional mandate of human response. See Special Topic: Covenant at 9:4. Yet this is a biblical paradox (cf. 3:4-5). God is faithful even when His people are not (cf. Hosea 1,3; II T im. 2:13).

▣ **“nullify”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: NULL AND VOID (*KATARGEŌ*)

This (*katargeō*) was one of Paul’s favorite words. He used it at least twenty-five times but it has a very wide semantic range.

- A. It’s basic etymological root is from *argos* which meant
 1. Inactive
 2. Idle
 3. Unused
 4. Useless
 5. Inoperative
- B. The compound with *kata* was used to express
 1. Inactivity
 2. Uselessness
 3. That which was cancelled
 4. That which was done away with
 5. That which was completely inoperative
- C. It is used once in Luke to describe a fruitless, therefore useless, tree (cf. Luke 13:7)
- D. Paul uses it in a figurative sense in two primary ways
 1. God making inoperative things which are hostile to mankind
 - a. Mankind’s sin nature – Rom. 6:6
 - b. The Mosaic law in relation to God’s promise of “the seed” – Rom. 4:14; Gal. 3:17; 5:4,11; Eph. 2:15
 - c. Spiritual forces – I Cor. 15:24
 - d. The “man of lawlessness” – II Thess. 2:8
 - e. Physical death – I Cor. 15:26; II Tim. 1:16 (Heb. 2:14)
 2. God replacing the old (covenant, age) for the new
 - a. Things related to the Mosaic Law – Rom. 3:3,31; 4:14; II Cor. 3:7,11,13,14
 - b. Analogy of marriage used of Law – Rom. 7:2,6

- c. The things of this age – I Cor. 13:8,10,11
- d. This body – I Cor. 6:13
- e. Leaders of this age – I Cor. 1:28; 2:6

This word is translated so many different ways, but its main meaning is to make something useless, null and void, inoperative, powerless, but not necessarily non-existent, destroyed or annihilated.

▣ **“the faithfulness of God”** This truth (cf. I Cor. 1:9; 10:13; II Cor. 1:18) is foundational to humans’ trust in God’s (cf. Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7).

- 1. unchanging character
- 2. eternal promises

He has revealed Himself in creation, revelation, covenant, and Messiah! Even amidst human unfaithfulness He remains faithful (cf. II Tim. 2:13)!

3:4

NASB **“May it never be!”**
NKJV, TEV **“Certainly not!”**
NRSV **“By no means!”**
NJB **“That would be absurd.”**

This is a rare use of the OPTATIVE MOOD which expressed a wish or a prayer and this phrase should be translated, “May it never be.” It may reflect a Hebrew idiom. This phrase of “astonished unbelief” was often used by Paul because of his literary technique of diatribe (cf. 3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). It was his way of emphatically denying a supposed assertion.

Notice the literary ways Paul rejects the supposed objector questions and statements.

- 1. “May it never be,” vv. 4,6
- 2. “Let God be found true, though every man be found a liar,” v. 4
- 3. “(I am speaking in human terms),” v. 5
- 4. “(as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say),” v. 8

▣ **“let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. This construction focuses on the continuing state of the subject; God is faithful and truthful (see Special Topic at 1:18), humans are unfaithful and liars! This is an allusion to Ps. 116:11 and is similar to what Job had to learn in 32:2; 40:8.

Notice the universal element of sinfulness in this chapter, represented by Paul’s use of *pas* (all, every) in vv. 4,9,12,19,20,23,24, but praise God, also the universal offer of salvation to all (cf. 3:22).

▣ **“as it is written”** Literally “it has been and continues to be written.” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. It became a technical idiom used to assert God’s inspiration of the Scriptures (cf. Matt. 5:17-19). It introduces a quote from Ps. 51:4 from the Septuagint (LXX).

3:5-6 The argument Paul is making in these verses relates to God’s special choice of Israel as His means of reaching the world (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). In the OT “election” referred to service, not special privilege. God made a covenant with them. He was faithful; they were unfaithful (cf. Nehemiah 9). The fact that God judged unfaithful Israelites is evidence of His righteousness.

Israel was meant to be a means of reaching the Gentiles. They failed (cf. 3:24)! God’s purpose of universal salvation (cf. Gen. 3:15) is not affected by the failure of Israel. As a matter of fact, God’s

faithfulness to His original covenant is confirmed in Romans 9-11. Unbelieving Israel is rejected, but a believing Israel will culminate God's plan of redemption.

Paul's diatribe in vv. 5-6 is paralleled in vv. 7-8.

3:5 "if" This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Verses 3 and 7 are also FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES.

▣ **"If our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God"** This PRONOUN, "our," must refer in a collective sense to all Jews. See special topic at 1:17

▣ **"what shall we say"** Paul is still using diatribe (cf. 3:5; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14,39). Paul is clarifying his presentation by the use of a supposed objector (cf. Mal. 1:2,6,7,12,13; 2:14,17 [twice]; 3:7,13,14).

▣

NASB **"(I am speaking in human terms)"**

NKJV **"(I speak as a man)"**

NRSV **"(I speak in a human way)"**

TEV **"(I speak here as men do)"**

NJB **"—to use a human analogy—"**

Paul often used human logic in his theological arguments (cf. 6:19; I Cor. 9:8; Gal. 3:15). Here it functions as a way of rejecting the assertions of the supposed objector.

3:7-8 There is an obvious parallel between vv. 5 and 7 (both begin with *ei de*). Paul is either

1. continuing to use the literary technique of diatribe, a supposed objector (cf. 3:5,7; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14,30)
2. reacting to criticism of his justification-by-faith-alone preaching (cf. v. 8)

Paul did not explain or answer the charge in detail but forcefully condemns the accusation. It is possible that the objection to a free undeserved justification by faith was that it would lead to lawlessness or just more unfaithful disobedience. Paul believed that free grace would lead to Christlikeness through a new spirit and life of gratitude! The Jews, the Greek moralists, and Paul all wanted ethical living in their converts! But it comes, not through conformity to an external law code, but a new heart, a new mind, and a new spirit (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-36).

3:7 "if" This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE (also vv. 3 and 5) which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

▣ **"abounded"** See Special Topic at 15:13.

▣ **"His glory"** See note at 3:23

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:9-18

⁹What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; ¹⁰as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; ¹¹THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ¹²ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." ¹³"THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPES IS UNDER THEIR LIPS"; ¹⁴"WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS"; ¹⁵"THEIR FEET ARE

SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, ¹⁶DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, ¹⁷AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.” ¹⁸“THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”

3:9 “Are we better than they” The grammar at this point is ambiguous. It is obvious that the main truth of this passage is that all humanity is in need of God’s grace (cf. 3:9,19,23; 11:32; Gal. 3:22). However, it is uncertain whether the specific reference was to Jews (Paul and his kinsmen, cf. TEV, RSV) or Christians (Paul and fellow believers apart from the grace of God). Jews did have some advantages (cf. vv. 1-2; 9:4-5), but these advantages make them even more responsible (cf. Luke 12:48)! All humans are spiritually lost and in need of God’s grace.

The term “better” is understood by a minority of scholars as PASSIVE VOICE instead of MIDDLE (“better off”), resulting in the translation “excelled by” or “disadvantaged by.”

Romans is often said to be the most locally neutral of Paul’s letters. Most of Paul’s letters address a local need or crises (occasional documents). However, the jealousy between believing Jewish leaders and believing Gentile leaders in the church at Rome may be in the background of chapters 1-3 and 9-11.

▣ **“for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin”** This VERB (AORIST MIDDLE [deponent] INDICATIVE) is found only here in the NT. Paul is referring to his sustained argument of 1:18-2:29.

▣ **“under sin”** Paul personifies “sin” (*Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 300) as a cruel taskmaster over fallen humanity (cf. 6:16-23).

3:10-18 “as it is written” This phrase also occurs in v. 4. The following statements are a series of OT quotes using metaphors of the human body to emphasize the fallenness of mankind.

1. vv. 10-12, Eccl. 7:20 or Ps. 14:1-3
2. v.13, Ps. 5:9 and 140:3
3. v.14, Ps. 10:7
4. vv. 15-17, Isa. 59:7-8 and Pro. 1:16
5. v.18, Ps. 36:1

It is surprising that Paul did not use Isa. 53:6.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:19-20

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

3:19 “we know that” See note at 2:2.

▣ **“the Law”** In this context it must refer to the whole OT (cf. v. 21) because of the non-Pentateuch passages quoted in vv. 10-18. Paul personifies “the law” as he did “the sin” inv. 9 (cf. 6:16-23).

▣ **“to those who are under the Law”** This refers uniquely to Jews and Gentile converts. Although it must be said that several of the OT quotes used refer to Gentiles in their original contexts. All humans are sinful (cf. 3:23)!



NASB “that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God”
NKJV “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God”
NRSV “so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God”
TEV “in order to stop all human excuses and bring the whole world under God’s judgment”
NJB “but it is meant to silence everyone and to lay the whole world open to God’s judgment”

This is the major theme of chapter 1:18-3:20 which is summarized in 3:23.



“every mouth” There are several phrases in vv. 19-20 which denote all humanity.

1. “every mouth,” v. 19
2. “all the world,” v. 19
3. “no flesh,” v. 20

3:20 “because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight” This is an allusion to Ps. 143:2 (also note Job 4:17; 9:2; 25:4; Ps. 130:3; Pro. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; I Kgs. 8:46; II Chr. 6:36), but with an added opening phrase. This was a major aspect of Paul’s gospel (cf. Gal. 2:16; 3:11). As a committed Pharisee, Paul uniquely knew the inability of religious enthusiasm and meticulous performance to provide inner peace.

For “flesh” see Special Topic at 1:3.



NASB, NRSV “through the Law comes the knowledge of sin”
NKJV “for by the law is the knowledge of sin”
TEV “what the Law does is to make man know that he has sinned”
NJB “all that law does is to tell us what is sinful”

This was one of the purposes of the OT. See Special Topic at 13:9. It was never meant to bring salvation to fallen mankind. Its purpose was to reveal sinfulness and drive all humans to the mercy of YHWH (cf. 4:15; 5:13,20; 7:7; Gal. 3:19-22, 23-29).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How does the Jews’ unfaithfulness affect God’s promises? (3:3-4)
2. Is there any advantage with God in being Jewish? (3:1-8)
3. What is the point of the supposed objection (diatribe) in vv. 5-8?
4. Does how one lives really count if justification is by grace through faith apart from works (cf. 3:8)?
5. Define the theological (Calvin) concept of total depravity (cf. 3:10-18).
6. What is the purpose of the Mosaic law, or law in general (cf. 3:20; Gal. 3:24-25)?
7. Why is Satan not mentioned at all in chapters 1-3 which deal with mankind’s lostness?

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ROMANS 3:21-31

- A. Romans 3:21-31
 1. the climactic summary of 1:18-3:20
 2. an amplification of 1:16-17
 3. an introduction to chapters 4-8 (esp. 3:28)
- B. This climactic summary of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith was characterized by the Reformers.
 1. Martin Luther as “the chief point and very central place of the epistle and the whole Bible”
 2. John Calvin as “there is not probably in the whole Bible a passage which sets forth more profoundly the righteousness of God in Christ”
- C. This is the theological essence of evangelical Christianity. To understand this context is to understand Christianity. This is the gospel in a two-paragraph summary as John 3:16 is the gospel in a verse. This is the heart and soul of Paul’s gospel presentation.

The three key interpretive questions are:

 1. What does the term “law” mean?
 2. What does the phrase “the righteousness of God” mean?
 3. What do the terms “faith” and “believe” mean?
- D. I thank God for the word “all” in v. 22 (cf. v. 29) and the word “gift” in v. 24 (cf. 5:15,17; 6:23).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:21-26

²¹But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

3:21 “But now” Paul is contrasting the Old Covenant with the New Covenant, the old age of rebellion with the new age of righteousness. This would then parallel “at the present time” (cf. v. 26; “but now” of 6:22; 7:6).

▣ **“now apart from the Law”** It is often hard to be certain whether Paul is referring to the Mosaic Law (NASB) or law in general (NRSV, TEV, NJB, NIV) in these opening chapters. In this context the Jewish Law fits Paul’s argument best. All humans have violated every set of moral, societal guidelines whether internal or external. Our problems as fallen mankind is that we want no guidelines at all except our own selfish, self-centered desires (cf. Genesis 3) which so characterizes modern western individualism.



NASB *“the righteousness of God”*
NKJV, NRSV **“the righteousness of God”**

TEV “God’s way of putting people right with himself”
NJB “God’s saving justice”

There is no definite ARTICLE with “righteousness.” This does not refer to God’s character, but God’s way of imparting forgiveness and acceptance to sinful people. This very phrase was used in the theological theme of Rom. 1:16-17. The clearly revealed mechanism is faith in the crucified Jesus Christ (cf. v. 22,24-26).

The fact that this term (*dikaïosonē*) and its derivatives (see note at 2:13) are used so often in this context shows its significance (cf. 1:17; 3:5,21,22,25,26; 4:3,5,6,9,11,13,22; 5:17,21; 6:13,16,18,19,20; 8:10; 9:28,30,31; 10:3,4,5,6,10,17). This Greek term is from an OT construction metaphor (*tsadak*) of “a standard” or “a measuring reed” (see Special Topic at 1:17). The standard is God Himself. This term reflects God’s character which is freely given to fallen mankind through Christ (cf. chap. 4; II Cor. 5:21). Admitting their need and accepting God’s gift was, and is, so humiliating to prideful, self-centered mankind—especially legalistic, religious mankind.

▣ **“has been manifested”** This phrase is very similar to 1:17. However, the VERB TENSE is different. The VERB here can be translated, “has been and continues to be clearly revealed.” It is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, while the synonym in 1:17 is PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. God has clearly revealed the gospel both in the OT (cf. chapter 4) and in Jesus.

▣ **“being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets”** This referred to two of the three divisions of the Hebrew canon (Law, Prophets, and Writings). These first two were used to refer to the whole (see note at 3:19; Matt. 5:17). This clearly showed that the gospel was contained in preliminary form in the OT (cf. Luke 24:27,44; Acts 10:43). It was not an afterthought, “Plan B,” or a last minute crash program (cf. 1:2).

3:22 “through faith in Jesus Christ” This is literally “through faith of Jesus Christ.” This is a GENITIVE construction. It is repeated in Gal. 2:16 and Phil. 3:9 as well as a similar form in Rom. 3:26; Gal. 2:16,20; 3:22. It could mean

1. the faith or faithfulness of Jesus (SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE)
2. Jesus as the object of our faith (OBJECTIVE GENITIVE)

The same grammatical construction in Gal. 2:16 makes #2 the best choice.

This shows the main aspect of God’s justification. It is the righteousness of God made operative in one’s life by God’s free gift through Christ (cf. 4:5; 6:23), which must be accepted by faith/belief/trust (cf. Eph. 2:8-9) and lived out in daily life (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10).

▣ **“for all”** The gospel is for all humans (cf. v. 24; Isa. 53:6; Ezek. 18:23,32; John 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:1; 4:14). What a great truth! This must balance the biblical truth of election. God’s election must not be understood in the Islamic sense of determinism nor in the ultra-Calvinistic sense of some vs. others, but in the covenantal sense. Old Testament election was for service, not privilege! God promised to redeem fallen mankind (cf. Gen. 3:15). God called and chose all mankind through Israel (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). God elects through faith in Christ. God always takes the initiative in salvation (cf. John 6:44,65). Ephesians 1 and Romans 9 are the strongest biblical passages on the doctrine of predestination which was theologically emphasized by Augustine and Calvin.

God chose believers not only to salvation (justification), but also to sanctification (cf. Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:12). This could relate to

1. our position in Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:21)
2. God’s desire to reproduce His character in His children (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 2:10)

God’s will for His children is both heaven one day and Christlikeness now!

The goal of predestination is holiness (cf. Eph. 1:4), not privilege! God's call was not to a selected few of Adam's children, but all! It was a call to God's own character (cf. I Thess. 5:23; II Thess. 2:13). To turn predestination into a theological tenant instead of a holy life is a tragedy of human theological systems. Often our theological grids distort biblical texts!

See Special Topic: Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance at 8:33.

▣ **“who believe”** Jesus died for all humans. Potentially all can be saved. It is mankind's personal reception (PRESENT PARTICIPLE, see Special Topic at 10:4) that makes Jesus' righteousness applicable to their lives (cf. 1:16; John 1:12; 3:16; 20:31; Rom. 10:9-13; I John 5:13). The Bible presents two criteria for imputed righteousness: faith and repentance (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:31 and see note at 1:5). This text clearly reveals the universal offer of salvation but the tragedy and mystery is that not all will be saved.

▣ **“for there is no distinction”** There is only one way and one Person by which humans (Jews and Gentiles) can be saved (cf. John 10:1-2,7; 11:25; 14:6). Anyone and everyone can be saved by faith in Christ (cf. 1:16; 4:11,16; 10:4,12; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11).

3:23-26 This is one sentence in Greek.

3:23

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “for all have sinned and fall short of”

TEV “all men have sinned and are far away from”

NJB “sinned and forfeited”

This is a summary of 1:18-3:20. Everyone needs to be saved by Christ (cf. 3:9,19; 11:32; Gal. 3:22; Isa. 53:6). “Sinned” is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE, while “continues to come short” is a PRESENT MIDDLE INDICATIVE. Possibly this phrase referred to both (1) mankind's collective fall in Adam (cf. 5:12-21) and (2) his continual individual acts of rebellion. None of the modern English translations specifically reflect this distinction.

This verse relates theologically to v. 21 and not directly to v. 24.

▣ **“the glory of God”** Humans were made in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), which was not true of any other created thing. Humans were to fellowship with the God of glory and reflect His character! Sin damaged the image, but God's grace through Christ's death and believers's faith has restored the image (cf. Col. 3:10).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kbd*) was originally a commercial term (which referred to a pair of scales) which meant “to be heavy.” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY

The biblical concept of “glory” is difficult to define. Believers' glory is that they understand the gospel and glory in God, not in themselves (cf. Jer. 9:23-24).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kbd*, BDB 217) was originally a commercial term relating to scales (“to be heavy”). That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God's majesty (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). YHWH can only be truly known through Christ (cf. John 14:8-11; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous.

1. it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”
2. it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God
3. it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22). It is first used of YHWH’s presence with His people during the wilderness wandering period in Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; and Num. 14:10.

3:24 “being justified as a gift by His grace” This is a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This is where the gospel begins—the grace of God who gives righteousness (cf. 5:15-17; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9). The Greek term “justify” (*dikaioō*) was from the same root as “righteousness” (*dikaionē*, see Special Topic at 1:17). God always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44,65).

In verses 24-25 there are three metaphors used to describe salvation.

1. “justified” which was a legal term that meant “no penalty given” or to pronounce one not guilty
2. “redemption” which was from the slave market that meant “bought back” or “to set free”
3. “propitiation” which was from the sacrificial system and meant the place of covering or atonement

It referred to the lid of the Ark of the Covenant where sacrificial blood was placed on the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16; Heb. 9:5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT EVIDENCE FOR ONE’S SALVATION

It is based on the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) in Jesus:

1. The character of the Father (cf. John 3:16), the work of the Son (cf. II Cor. 5:21), and the ministry of the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:14-16) not on human performance, not wages due for obedience, not just a creed
2. It is a gift (cf. Rom. 3:24; 6:23; Eph. 2:5,8-9)
3. It is a new life, a new world-view (cf. James and I John)
4. It is knowledge (the gospel), fellowship (faith in and with Jesus), and a new lifestyle (Spirit-led Christlikeness) all three, not just any one by itself
5. See the tests of true salvation at Contextual Insights to I John 2:3-3:3, C.

▣ **“gift”** Paul uses this concept several times using different terms.

1. *dōrean*, ADVERB, “freely”
2. *dōrea*, NOUN, “free gift”
3. *dōron*, NOUN, “gift” (cf. Eph. 2:8)
4. *charisma*, NOUN, “free debt” or “free favor” (cf. 1:11; 5:15,16; 6:23; 11:29; 12:6)
5. *charisomai*, VERB, “grant as a free favor” (cf. 8:32)
6. *charis*, NOUN, “free favor” or “free gift” (cf. 4:4,16; 11:5,6; Eph. 2:5,8)

▣ **“through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus”** The mechanism for our salvation is Jesus’ substitutionary death and resurrection. The biblical focus is not on how much was paid or to whom the price was paid (Augustine), but on the fact that mankind has been delivered from sin’s guilt and punishment by means of an innocent substitute (cf. John 1:29,36; II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 1:19).

The verse also shows the costliness of Gen. 3:15. Jesus bore the curse (cf. Gal. 3:13) and died (cf. II Cor. 5:21) as a substitute for fallen mankind. Salvation may be free, but it is surely not cheap.

SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM

I. OLD TESTAMENT

A. There are primarily two Hebrew legal terms which convey this concept.

1. *Ga'al* (BDB 145, I), which basically means “to free by means of a price paid.” A form of the term *go'el* adds to the concept a personal intermediary, usually a family member (i.e., kinsman redeemer). This cultural aspect of the right to buy back objects, animals, land (cf. Leviticus 25,27), or relatives (cf. Ruth 4:15; Isa. 29:22) is transferred theologically to YHWH's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:15; Jer. 31:11). He becomes “the redeemer” (cf. Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Pro. 23:11; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 50:34).
2. *Padah* (BDB 804), which basically means “to deliver” or “to rescue”
 - a. the redemption of the firstborn (Exod. 13:13,14 and Num. 18:15-17)
 - b. physical redemption is contrasted with spiritual redemption (Ps. 49:7,8,15)
 - c. YHWH will redeem Israel from their sin and rebellion (Ps. 130:7-8)

B. The theological concept involves several related items.

1. There is a need, a bondage, a forfeiting, an imprisonment.
 - a. physical
 - b. social
 - c. spiritual (cf. Ps. 130:8)
2. A price must be paid for freedom, release, and restoration.
 - a. of the nation of Israel (cf. Deut. 7:8)
 - b. of the individual (cf. Job 19:25-27; 33:28)
3. Someone must act as intermediary and benefactor. In *gaal* this one is usually a family member or near kin (i.e., *go'el*, BDB 145).
4. YHWH often describes Himself in familial terms.
 - a. Father
 - b. Husband
 - c. Near Kin Redeemer/Avenger

Redemption was secured through YHWH's personal agency; a price was paid, and redemption was achieved!

II. NEW TESTAMENT

A. There are several terms used to convey the theological concept.

1. *Agorazō* (cf. I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; II Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:3-4). This is a commercial term which reflects a price paid for something. We are blood-bought people who do not control our own lives. We belong to Christ.
2. *Exagorazō* (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). This is also a commercial term. It reflects Jesus' substitutionary death on our behalf. Jesus bore the “curse” of a performance-based law (i.e., Mosaic Law. Cf. Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:14), which sinful humans could not accomplish.

He bore the curse (cf. Deut. 21:23) for us all (cf. Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21)! In Jesus, God's justice and love merge into full forgiveness, acceptance, and access!

3. *Luō*, "to set free"
 - a. *Lutron*, "a price paid" (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). These are powerful words from Jesus' own mouth concerning the purpose of His coming, to be the Savior of the world by paying a sin-debt He did not owe (cf. John 1:29).
 - b. *Lutroō*, "to release"
 - (1) to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21)
 - (2) to give Himself to redeem and purify a people (Titus 2:14)
 - (3) to be a sinless substitute (I Pet. 1:18-19)
 - c. *Lutrōsis*, "redemption," "deliverance," or "liberation"
 - (1) Zacharias' prophecy about Jesus, Luke 1:68
 - (2) Anna's praise to God for Jesus, Luke 2:38
 - (3) Jesus' better, once offered sacrifice, Heb. 9:12
 4. *Apolytrōsis*
 - a. redemption at the Second Coming (cf. Acts 3:19-21)
 - (1) Luke 21:28
 - (2) Romans 8:23
 - (3) Ephesians 1:14; 4:30
 - (4) Hebrews 9:15
 - b. redemption in Christ's death
 - (1) Romans 3:24
 - (2) I Corinthians 1:30
 - (3) Ephesians 1:7
 - (4) Colossians 1:14
 5. *Antilytron* (cf. I Tim. 2:6). This is a crucial text (as is Titus 2:14) which links release to Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross. He is the one and only acceptable sacrifice, the one who dies for "all" (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14).
- B. The theological concept in the NT.
1. Mankind is enslaved to sin (cf. John 8:34; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:23).
 2. Mankind's bondage to sin has been revealed by the OT Mosaic Law (cf. Galatians 3) and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7). Human performance has become a death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).
 3. Jesus, the sinless lamb of God, has come and died in our place (cf. John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21). We have been purchased from sin so that we might serve God (cf. Romans 6).
 4. By implication both YHWH and Jesus are "near kin" who act on our behalf. This continues the familial metaphors (i.e., father, husband, son, brother, near kin).
 5. Redemption was not a price paid to Satan (i.e., Medieval theology), but the reconciliation of God's word and God's justice with God's love and full provision in Christ. At the cross peace was restored, human rebellion was forgiven, the image of God in mankind is now fully functional again in intimate fellowship!

6. There is still a future aspect of redemption (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), which involves our resurrection bodies and personal intimacy with the Triune God. Our resurrected bodies will be like His (cf. I John 3:2). He had a physical body, but with an extra dimensional aspect. It is hard to define the paradox of I Cor. 15:12-19 with I Cor. 15:35-58. Obviously there is a physical, earthly body and there will be a heavenly, spiritual body. Jesus had both!

3:25

NASB “whom God displayed publicly”

NKJV “whom God set forth”

NRSV “whom God put forward”

TEV “God offered”

NJB “who was appointed by God”

This is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE of *protithēmi* (in Rom. 1:13 and Eph. 1:9 it means “to purpose,” as does the NOUN in Rom. 8:28), which meant that God Himself revealed His own heart and purpose by the death of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:9; Gal. 3:1). God’s eternal redemptive plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; 26:22; and Special Topic at 1:5) involved the sacrifice of Jesus (cf. Isa. 53:10; Rev. 13:8). See note at 9:11.

▣ **“to demonstrate”** This Greek term *endeiknumai* (*endeixis*, cf. 3:25,26) is used several times in Romans (cf. 2:15; 9:17,23; LXX Exod. 9:16). Its basic meaning is to manifest or display. God wanted humanity to clearly understand His redemptive purpose, plan, and righteousness. This context is setting out a biblical worldview

1. about God’s character
2. about Christ’s work
3. about humanity’s need
4. about redemption’s purpose.

God wants us to understand! This context is crucial for a proper understanding of Christianity. Some of the words and phrases are ambiguous or can be understood in several ways, but the thrust of the whole is very clear and plain. This context is the theological north star for the gospel.

▣

NASB “as a propitiation in His blood”

NKJV “to be a propitiation by His blood”

NRSV “as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood”

TEV “so that by his blood he should become the means by which people’s sins are forgiven”

NJB “to sacrifice his life so as to win reconciliation”

In the Greco-Roman world this word carried the concept of a restoration of fellowship with an estranged deity by means of a price being paid. However, it is not used in this sense in the Septuagint. It was used in the Septuagint and in Heb. 9:5 to translate “mercy seat” (cf. Exod. 25:21-22; Lev. 16:12-15), which was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant located in the Holy of Holies, the place where atonement was procured on behalf of the nation on the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16). Obviously Paul is using sacrificial metaphors from Israel’s sacrificial system (i.e., Leviticus 1-7). These metaphors (i.e., propitiation, ransom, sacrifice) are understood only in connection with the OT oracles of God. Paul then must explain their relevance to all mankind. YHWH revealed Himself to Abraham/Israel to reveal Himself to all; all are in His image; all have rebelled; all can be saved through faith in Christ (Jewish Messiah).

This term must be dealt with in a way that does not lessen God’s revulsion to sin, but affirms His positive redemptive attitude toward sinners. A good discussion is found in James Stewart’s *A Man in Christ*,

pp. 214-224. One way to accomplish this is to translate the term so that it reflects God's work in Christ; "a propitiatory sacrifice"; or "with propitiatory power."

"In His blood" is an Hebraic way of referring to the substitutionary sacrifice of the innocent lamb of God (cf. John 1:29). To fully understand this concept Leviticus 1-7 is crucial as well as the Day of Atonement in chapter 16. Blood refers to a sinless life given on behalf of the guilty (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12). One died for all (cf. 5:12-21)!

▣ **"through faith"** Here again is the mechanism (cf. 1:17; 3:22,25,26,27,28,30) for anyone's and everyone's personal benefit available in Jesus' substitutionary death.

This phrase is omitted in the ancient uncial manuscript A from the 5th century (also the Greek text used by Chrysostom) and a 12th century uncial MS (2127). It is included in all other ancient Greek manuscripts. Some have the DEFINITE ARTICLE (cf. MSS P⁴⁰, B, C³, D³) with "faith" and some do not (cf. MSS \aleph , C*, D*, F, G), however, this does not affect the meaning. The UBS³ rates its inclusion as B (almost certain).

▣ **"to demonstrate His righteousness"** God must be true to His character and His word (cf. Mal. 3:6). In the OT the soul that sins must die (cf. Gen. 2:17; Ezek. 18:4,20). God said He would not acquit the guilty (cf. Exod. 23:7). God's love for fallen mankind is so great He was willing to become a man, fulfill the Law, and die in fallen humanity's place (cf. 5:12-21). God's love and justice meet in Jesus (cf. v. 26).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV **"He passed over the sins previously committed"**

TEV **"in the past he was patient and overlooked people's sins"**

NJB **"for the past, when sins went unpunished"**

The term "passed over" is *pareisis*, which is used only here in the NT and never in the Septuagint. The Greek fathers and Jerome took it in its Greek literary meaning of "the forgiveness of a debt" (cf. Moulton and Milligan, p. 493). However, *pariēmi*, the VERB from which it comes means "to let pass beside" or "to relax" (cf. Luke 11:42).

So the question is did God forgive sins in the past looking toward Christ's future work or did He simply overlook them knowing Christ's future death would deal with the sin problem? The result is the same. Human sin, past, present, and future, is dealt with by Christ's sacrifice.

This was a past act of God's grace looking forward to Christ's work (cf. Acts 17:30; Rom. 4:15; 5:13) as well as a present and future act (cf. v. 26). God did not and does not take sin lightly, but He does accept Jesus' sacrifice as a full and final remedy to human rebellion. It is no longer a barrier to intimate fellowship with Himself, which was the purpose of creation (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

3:26 The term "righteousness" in v. 25 is etymologically related to the terms "just" and "justifier" of v. 26. God desires His character to be manifested in believers' lives through faith in Christ. Jesus becomes our righteousness (cf. II Cor. 5:21), but believers must also become conformed to His righteousness, His likeness (cf. 8:29; Matt. 5:48; Lev. 19:2). See Special Topic at 1:17.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV **"the one who has faith in Jesus"**

TEV **"everyone who believes in Jesus"**

NJB **"everyone who has faith in Jesus"**

REB **"anyone who puts his faith in Jesus"**

NET **"the one who lives because of Jesus' faithfulness"**

The Greek text has “the *one* of faith of Jesus.” The difficulty comes in the multitude of GENITIVE usages (see G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, p. 99). Most of the English translations see it as a person’s belief/faith/trust in Jesus. The NET Bible takes it as referring to 3:22. However, v. 22 has both a reference to

1. Jesus’ faithfulness
2. believers’ faith

Salvation is a result of Jesus’ faithfulness which must be received (cf. v. 30).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:27-30

²⁷Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. ²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. ²⁹Or is God *the* God of Jews only? Is He not *the* God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

3:27 “Where then is boasting” The presence of the ARTICLE with “boasting” may reflect the pride of the Jews (cf. 2:17,23). The gospel is humbling. Fallen mankind (Jews and Gentiles) cannot help themselves (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). See Special Topic: Boasting at 2:17.

Just a brief further note to clarify my previous statement. Although humans cannot merit God’s love and forgiveness does not imply they have no part in their own salvation. Humans must sense their sin/guilt and embrace God’s offer in Christ. God deals with fallen humanity by means of “covenant.” We must respond and continue to respond.

1. repentance
2. faith
3. obedience
4. perseverance

We do have a crucial part in our relationship with God. We are responders! But we must respond! Free will is as crucial a biblical doctrine as is sovereignty. The Bible, being an eastern book, presents truth in tension-filled pairs.

SPECIAL TOPIC: EASTERN LITERATURE

The Big Picture – Biblical paradoxes

1. This insight has been the most helpful to me personally as one who loves and trusts the Bible as God’s Word. In trying to take the Bible seriously it became obvious that different texts reveal truth in selected, not systematic ways. One inspired text cannot cancel or depreciate another inspired text! Truth comes in knowing all Scripture (all Scripture, not just some, is inspired, cf. II Tim. 3:16-17), not quoting a single passage (proof-texting)!
2. Most biblical truths (eastern literature) are presented in dialectical or paradoxical pairs (remember the NT authors, except Luke, are Hebrew thinkers, writing in common Greek. Wisdom Literature and Poetic Literature present truth in parallel lines. The antithetical parallelism functions like the paradox. This synthetic parallelism functions like parallel passages). Somehow both are equally true! These paradoxes are painful to our cherished, simplistic traditions!
 - a. predestination versus human free will
 - b. security of the believer versus the need for perseverance
 - c. original sin versus volitional sin
 - d. Jesus as God versus Jesus as man

- e. Jesus as equal with the Father versus Jesus as subservient to the Father
- f. Bible as God’s Word versus human authorship
- g. sinlessness (perfectionism, cf. Romans 6) versus sinning less
- h. initial instantaneous justification and sanctification versus progressive sanctification
- i. justification by faith (Romans 4) versus justification confirmed by works (cf. James 2:14-26)
- j. Christian freedom (cf. Rom. 14:1-23; I Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33) versus Christian responsibility (cf. Gal. 5:16-21; Eph. 4:1)
- k. God’s transcendence versus His immanence
- l. God as ultimately unknowable versus knowable in Scripture and Christ
- m. Paul’s many metaphors for salvation
 - (1) adoption
 - (2) sanctification
 - (3) justification
 - (4) redemption
 - (5) glorification
 - (6) predestination
 - (7) reconciliation
- n. the kingdom of God as present versus future consummation
- o. repentance as a gift of God versus repentance as a mandated response for salvation (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21)
- p. the OT is permanent versus the OT has passed away and is null and void (cf. Matt. 3:17-19 vs. 5:21-48; Romans 7 vs. Galatians 3)
- q. believers are servants/slaves or children/heirs

▣ **“It is excluded”** This term (*ek* [out] plus *kleiō* [shut]) is used only here and in Gal. 4:17. It literally means “to lock out.”

▣ **“by a law of faith”** God’s New Covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 (Ezek. 36:22-38) is not based on performance, but on trust/faith/belief (*pistis*) in His gracious character and promises. Both the Old and New Covenants were meant to change fallen mankind into God’s character (righteous, i.e., Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48; Rom. 8:29).

3:28 “we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.” This is a summary of 3:21-26 and a foreshadowing of chapters 4-8 (cf. II Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5). Salvation is a free gift through faith in Christ’s finished work (cf. 3:24; 5:15,17; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9). However, maturity is a “cost everything” life of obedience, service, and worship (cf. Gal. 5:6; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:12; and see note at 1:5).

3:29 God’s purpose has always been to redeem all humans made in His image (Gen. 1:26,27; 5:1; 9:6). The redemptive promise of Gen. 3:15 is to all of Adam’s children. He chose Abraham in order to choose the world (cf. Gen. 12:31; Exod. 19:4-6; John 3:16).

This verse, like 3:9, may reflect tension in the Roman church between believing Jewish leadership, who may have left Rome following Nero’s edict forbidding Jewish worship which resulted in believing Gentile leadership, who replaced them. Chapters 9-11 may also address this same tension.

3:30

NASB “since indeed God is one”

NKJV “since there is one God”

NRSV “since God is one”

TEV “God is one”

NJB “since there is only one God”

This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. If monotheism is true, then He must be the God of all people.

SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM

The concept of “monotheism” (one and only one God), not just the “high god” of polytheism or the good god of Iranian dualism (Zoroastrianism), is unique to Israel (Abraham, 2000 B.C.). Only one rare exception briefly in Egypt (Amenhotep IV, also known as Akhenaten, 1367-1350 or 1386-1361 B.C.).

This concept is expressed in several phrases in the OT.

1. “no one like YHWH our *Elohim*,” Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 33:26; I Kgs. 8:23
2. “no other besides Him,” Deut. 4:35,39; 32:39; I Sam. 2:2; II Sam. 22:32; Isa. 45:21; 44:6,8; 45:6,21
3. “YHWH is one,” Deut. 6:4; Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; I Tim. 2:5; James 2:19
4. “none like thee,” II Sam. 7:22; Jer. 10:6
5. “Thou alone are God,” Ps. 86:10; Isa. 37:16
6. “Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me,” Isa. 43:10
7. “there is no other; besides Me. . .there is no other,” Isa. 45:5,6,22
8. “there is none else, no other God,” Isa. 45:14,18
9. “there is none except Me,” Isa. 45:21
10. “there is no other; . . .there is no one like Me,” Isa. 46:9

It must be admitted that this crucial doctrine has been revealed in progressive ways. The early statements could be understood as “henotheism” or practical monotheism (there are other gods, but only one god for us, cf. Exod. 15:11; 20:2-5; Deut. 3:28; 5:7; 6:4,14; 10:17; 32:12; I Kgs. 8:23; Ps. 83:18; 86:8; 136:1-2).

The first texts that begin to denote a singularity (philosophical monotheism) are early (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35,39; 33:26). The full and complete claims are found in Isaiah 43-46 (cf. 43:11; 44:6,8; 45:7,14,18,22; 46:5,9).

The NT alludes to Deut. 6:4 in Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 2:5; and James 2:19. Jesus quotes it as the first commandment in Matt. 22:36-37; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27. The OT, as well as the NT, asserts the reality of other spiritual beings (demons, angels), but only one creator/redeemer God (YHWH, Gen. 1:1).

Biblical monotheism is characterized by

1. God is one and unique (ontology is assumed, not specified)
2. God is personal (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8)
3. God is ethical (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8-10)
4. God created humans in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) for fellowship (i.e., #2). He is a jealous God (cf. Exod. 20:2-3)

From the NT

1. God has three eternal, personal manifestations (see Special Topic: The Trinity at 8:11)
2. God is perfectly and completely revealed in Jesus (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 1:2-3)
3. God's eternal plan for fallen humanity's redemption is the sacrificial offering of His only Son (Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:6-11; Hebrews)

▣ **“He will justify the circumcised by faith”** The Greek word “justify” is from the same root as “righteousness.” See Special Topic at 1:17. There is only one way to be right with God (cf. Rom. 9:30-32). The two criteria for salvation are faith and repentance (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21; see note at 1:5). This is true for both Jews and Greeks.

▣ **“by faith. . .through faith”** There is obvious parallelism between these two clauses. The PREPOSITIONS *ek* and *dia* are used here synonymously. No distinction is intended.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:31

³¹**Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.**

3:31

NASB “Do we then nullify the Law through faith”
NKJV “Do we then make void the law through faith”
NRSV “Do we then overthrow the law by this faith”
TEV “Does this mean that by this faith we do away with the Law”
NJB “Do we mean that faith makes the Law pointless”

The NT presents the OT in two different ways.

1. it is inspired, God-given revelation that will never pass away (cf. Matt. 5:17-19; Rom. 7:12,14,16)
2. it is worn out and has passed away (cf. Heb. 8:13).

Paul used the term “nullify” at least twenty-five times. It is translated “make null and void,” “render powerless,” and “to make of no effect.” See Special Topic at 3:3. For Paul the Law was a custodian (cf. Gal. 3:23) and tutor (cf. Gal. 3:24), but could not give eternal life (cf. Gal. 2:16,19; 3:19). It is the grounds of man's condemnation (cf. Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14). The Mosaic Law functioned both as revelation and a moral test as did the “Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil.”

There is uncertainty as to what Paul meant by “the Law.”

1. a system of righteous works of Judaism
2. a stage for Gentile believers to pass through to salvation in Christ (Judaizers in Galatians)
3. a standard by which all humans fall short (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20; 7:7-25; Gal. 3:1-29).

▣ **“we establish the Law”** In light of the previous phrase, what does this phrase mean? It could indicate that

1. the Law was not a way of salvation but it was a continuing moral guide
2. it testified to the doctrine of “justification by faith,” 3:21; 4:3 (Gen. 15:6; Ps. 32:1-2,10-11)
3. the Law's weakness (human rebellion, cf. Rom. 7; Gal. 3) was fully satisfied by Christ's death, 8:3-4
4. the purpose of revelation is to restore the image of God in man

The Law, after forensic righteousness, becomes a guide to true righteousness or Christlikeness. See Special Topic: Paul's Views of the Mosaic Law at 13:9.

The shocking paradox is that the Law failed to establish God's righteousness, but through its nullification, by means of God's gift of grace through faith, the Christian lives a righteous, godly life. The goal of the Law has been met, not by human performance, but by the free gift of the grace of God in Christ! For "establish" see Special Topic: Stand at 5:2.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Outline Romans 3:21-31 in your own words.
2. Why did God pass over man's sins in times past (v. 25)?
3. How was the OT believer saved from sin (3:25)?
4. How does faith in Jesus confirm the Law (3:31)?

ROMANS 4

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Example of Abraham 4:1-12	Abraham Justified By Faith 4:1-4 David Celebrates the Same Truth 4:5-8 Abraham Justified Before Circumcision 4:9-12	Abraham Justified By Faith 4:1-8 4:9-12	The Example of Abraham 4:1-8 4:9-12	Abraham Justified By Faith 4:1-8 Justified Before Circumcision 4:9-12
The Promise Realized Through Faith 4:13-25	The Promise Granted Through Faith 4:13-25	The True Descendants of Abraham 4:13-15 4:16-25	God's Promise Received 4:13-15 4:16-25	Not Justified by Obedience to the Law 4:13-17 Abraham's Faith a Model of Christian Faith 4:18-25

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Paul's shocking theology stated in 3:21-31 asserted that fallen mankind was declared to be right with God as a free gift, totally apart from the Law of Moses. Obviously Paul had Jewish opposition in mind! Paul now attempts to prove that his gospel was no innovation (cf. 3:21b) by giving OT examples from both Abraham and David (cf. vv. 6-8).

- B. Romans 4 presents evidence drawn from the Law of Moses, Genesis - Deuteronomy, for the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. This is summarized in 3:21-31. For a Jew, a quote from the writings of Moses had great theological weight, especially relating to Abraham, who was seen as the father of the Jewish nation. David was seen as a type of the coming Messiah (cf. II Samuel 7).
- C. The tension in Rome between believing Jews and believing Gentiles may have been the occasion for this discussion. It is possible that the Jewish Christian leaders felt forced by Nero (who cancelled all Jewish rituals) to leave Rome. In the interim they were replaced by Gentile Christian leaders. The return of the first group caused controversy as to who should be in leadership positions.
- D. Romans 4 shows that fallen mankind has always been saved by God's grace through faith and repentance toward God in relation to the spiritual light they have (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3). In many ways the New Covenant (gospel, cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) is not radically different from the Old Covenant.
- E. This way of righteousness by grace through faith is open to all, not just the Patriarchs or national Israel. Paul is here developing and extending his theological argument using Abraham, which he had earlier developed in Galatians 3.
- F. I must admit that as an evangelical, Rom. 3:21-31; 4:1-25; 5:1-21 and Galatians 3 are crucial texts. They explain Christianity in a way that I can understand! My hope lies in
1. the grace of God
 2. the work of Christ
 3. the trustworthiness of Scripture
 4. the clear writings of Paul

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-8

¹What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."⁴Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, ⁶just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: ⁷"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED."⁸"BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

4:1 "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather" Abraham's name meant "father of a multitude" (cf. vv. 16-18). His original name, Abram, meant "exalted father."

The literary technique used here is called a diatribe (cf. 4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14,30). The reason for using Abraham (Gen. 11:27-25:11) as an example is either

1. because the Jews put such merit in their racial origin (cf. Matt. 3:9; John 8:33,37,39)
2. because his personal faith exemplifies the covenant pattern (Gen. 15:6)

3. his faith preceded the giving of the Law to Moses (cf. Exod. 19-20)
4. he was used by false teachers (i.e., Judaizers, cf. Galatians)

For some reason early scribes vacillated between

1. forefather, MSS \aleph^{*2} , A, C*
2. father, MSS \aleph^1 , C³, D, E, G

Possibly it had to do with the question of Abraham a's forefather (i.e., Patriarch, Paul is addressing Jews) of the nation of Israel versus Abraham the father of all who exercise faith in God (father of both Jews and Gentiles, 2:28-29).

▣ **“flesh”** See Special Topic at 1:3.

4:2 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE (cf. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, vol. 4, p. 350), which is assumed to be true from the perspective of the author or for his literary purpose. This is a good example of a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE that is false in reality, but serves to make a theological point (cf. v. 14).

Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 33, p. 372, says this may be a mixed CONDITIONAL SENTENCE with the first part being SECOND CLASS (contrary to fact, “if” Abraham was justified by works, which he was not. . .”) and the second being FIRST CLASS.

▣ **“justified by works”** This is the opposite of justification by grace through faith in Christ. If this way of salvation through human effort (4:4) were possible, it would have made the ministry of Christ unnecessary. Justification by works of the Law is exactly what many rabbis asserted in connection with Abraham (cf. *Wisdom* 10:5; *Ecclesiasticus* 44:20-21; *I Mac.* 2:52; *Jubilees* 6:19-20; 15:1-2). Paul, as a rabbinical student, would have been fully aware of these texts.

However, the OT clearly shows fallen mankind's inability to perform the covenant works of God. Therefore, the OT became a curse, a death sentence (cf. Gal. 3:13; Col 2:14).

The Jewish scholars knew Abraham existed before the Law of Moses, but they believed he anticipated the Law and kept it (cf. *Ecclesiasticus* 44:20 and *Jubilees* 6:19; 15:1-2).

▣ **“he has something to boast about”** This theme often appears in Paul's writings. His background as a Pharisee sensitized him to this problem (cf. 3:27; I Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:8-9). See Special Topic: Boasting at 2:17.

4:3

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, TEV

“Abraham believed God”

NJB

“Abraham put his faith in God”

This is a quote from Gen. 15:6. Paul uses it three times in this chapter (cf. 4:3,9,22), which shows its importance in Paul's theological understanding of salvation. The term “faith” in the OT meant loyalty, fidelity, or trustworthiness and was a description of God's nature, not ours. It came from a Hebrew term (*emun, emunah*) which meant “to be sure or stable.” Saving faith is

1. mental assent (set of truths)
2. volitional commitment (a decision)
3. moral living (a lifestyle)
4. primarily a relational (welcoming of a person)

See Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT at 1:5.

It must be emphasized that Abraham's faith was not in a future Messiah but in God's promise that he would have a child and descendants (cf. Gen. 12:2; 15:2-5; 17:4-8; 18:14). Abraham responded to this

promise by trusting God. He still had doubts and problems about this promise, as a matter of fact it still took thirteen years to be fulfilled. His imperfect faith, however, was still accepted by God. God is willing to work with flawed human beings who respond to Him and His promises in faith, even if that faith is the size of a mustard seed (cf. Matt. 17:20).

4:3,4,5,6,8,9,10,22,23,24

NASB, NRSV “it was reckoned to him”

NKJV “it was accounted to him”

TEV “for God accepted him”

NJB “this faith was considered”

“It” refers to Abraham’s faith in God’s promises.

“Reckoned” (*logizomia*, cf. 3:28 and 11 times in chapter 4) is an accounting term which meant “imputed” or “deposited to one’s account” (cf. LXX Gen. 15:6; Lev. 7:18; 17:4). This same truth is beautifully expressed in II Cor. 5:21 and Gal. 3:6. It is possible that Paul combined Gen. 15:6 and Ps. 32:2 because they both use the accounting term “reckoned.” This combining of texts was a hermeneutical principle used by the rabbis.

The OT use of this term in the Septuagint is not so much a banking term as a bookkeeping term, possibly related to “the books” of Dan. 7:10; 12:1. These two metaphorical books (God’s memory) are

1. the book of deeds or remembrances (cf. Ps. 56:8; 139:16; Isa. 65:6; Mal. 3:16; Rev. 20:12-13)
2. the book of life (cf. Exod. 32:32; Ps. 69:28; Isa. 4:3; Dan. 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27).

The book into which Abraham’s faith was ascribed by God as righteousness is “the book of life.”

4:3,5,6,9,10,11,13,22,25 “as righteousness” This reflected the OT term “measuring reed” (*tsadak*). It was a construction metaphor used for the character of God. God is straight and all humans are crooked. In the NT it was used in a positional, legal (forensic) sense which hopefully is moving toward godly lifestyle characteristics. The goal of God for every Christian is His own character, or to put it another way, Christlikeness (cf. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19). See Special Topic: Righteousness at 1:17.

4:5 The essence of faith is responding to the God who reveals Himself, without ultimate reliance on personal effort or merit. This does not imply that once we are saved and have the indwelling Spirit that our lifestyle is not important. The goal of Christianity is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now. We are not saved, justified, or given right standing by our works, but we are redeemed unto good works (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 & 10; James and I John). A changed and changing life is the evidence that one is saved. Justification should produce sanctification!

▣ **“believes”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH, BELIEVE, OR TRUST (*Pistis* [NOUN], *Pisteuō*, [VERB], *Pistos* [ADJECTIVE])

- A. This is such an important term in the Bible (cf. Heb. 11:1,6). It is the subject of Jesus’ early preaching (cf. Mark 1:15). There are at least two new covenant requirements: repentance and faith (cf. 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).
- B. Its etymology
 1. The term “faith” in the OT meant loyalty, fidelity, or trustworthiness and was a description of God’s nature, not ours.

2. It came from a Hebrew term (*emun, emunah*), which meant “to be sure or stable.” Saving faith is mental assent (set of truths), moral living (a lifestyle), and primarily a relational (welcoming of a person) and volitional commitment (a decision) to that person.

C. Its OT usage

It must be emphasized that Abraham’s faith was not in a future Messiah, but in God’s promise that he would have a child and descendants (cf. Genesis 12:2; 15:2-5; 17:4-8; 18:14). Abraham responded to this promise by trusting in God. He still had doubts and problems about this promise, which took thirteen years to be fulfilled. His imperfect faith, however, was accepted by God. God is willing to work with flawed human beings who respond to Him and His promises in faith, even if it is the size of a mustard seed (cf. Matt. 17:20).

D. Its NT usage

The term “believed” is from the Greek term (*pisteuō*) which can also be translated “believe,” “faith,” or “trust.” For example, the NOUN does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the VERB is used often. In John 2:23-25 there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd’s commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term “believe” are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22,31-32).

E. Its use with PREPOSITIONS

1. *eis* means “into.” This unique construction emphasizes believers putting their trust/faith in Jesus
 - a. into His name (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; I John 5:13)
 - b. into Him (John 2:11; 3:15,18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5,31,39,48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45,48; 17:37,42; Matt. 18:6; Acts 10:43; Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 1:8)
 - c. into Me (John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25,26; 12:44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20)
 - d. into the Son (John 3:36; 9:35; I John 5:10)
 - e. into Jesus (John 12:11; Acts 19:4; Gal. 2:16)
 - f. into Light (John 12:36)
 - g. into God (John 14:1)
2. *en* means “in” as in John 3:15; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:14
3. *epi* means “in” or upon, as in Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; 16:31; 22:19; Rom. 4:5,24; 9:33; 10:11; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 2:6
4. the DATIVE CASE with no PREPOSITION as in Gal. 3:6; Acts 18:8; 27:25; I John 3:23; 5:10
5. *hoti*, which means “believe that,” gives content as to what to believe
 - a. Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69)
 - b. Jesus is the I Am (John 8:24)
 - c. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38)
 - d. Jesus is the Messiah (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - e. Jesus is the Son of God (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - f. Jesus was sent by the Father (John 11:42; 17:8,21)

- g. Jesus is one with the Father (John 14:10-11)
- h. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:27,30)
- i. Jesus identified Himself in the covenant name of the Father, “I Am” (John 8:24; 13:19)
- j. We will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)
- k. Jesus died and rose again (I Thess. 4:14)



NASB, NKJV “his faith”
NRSV “such faith”
TEV, NJB “it is this faith”

Abraham’s faith was counted to him as righteousness. This was not based on Abraham’s actions, but his response. His actions confirmed his faith (cf. James 2:14-26).

The word “reckoned” is also used of Phinehas in LXX of Ps. 106:31, which refers to Num. 25:11-13. In this case the reckoning was based on Phinehas’ actions, but not so with Abraham in Gen. 15:6!

▣ **“but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness”** This is a shocking statement! It is an obvious parallel to Abraham in v. 3 (Gen. 15:6). Righteousness is a gift of God (see note at 3:24), not the result of human performance. See Special Topic at 1:17.

▣ **“David”** As Abraham was not a perfect individual, yet was right with God by faith, so too, was sinful David (cf. Ps. 32 and 51). God loves and works with fallen humanity (Genesis 3) who exhibit faith in Him (OT) and in His Son (NT).

4:6 “apart from works” Paul emphasizes this phrase by inserting it just before his OT quote (cf. Ps. 32:1-2). Mankind is right with God by His grace mediated through Christ by means of the individual person’s faith, not their religious performance (cf. 3:21-31; Eph. 2:8-10).

4:7-8 This is a quote from Ps. 32:1-2. Both VERBS in v. 7, “have been forgiven” and “have been covered” are AORIST PASSIVE. God is the implied agent. Verse 8 contains a strong DOUBLE NEGATIVE, “will not under any circumstances” be imputed, reckoned, taken into account. Notice the three VERBS in this quote; all denote the acquittal of sin.

4:7 “whose sins have been covered” This is a quote from Ps. 32:1. The concept of “covering” was central to the sacrificial aspect of Israel’s cultus (i.e., Leviticus 1-7). By God covering sin (AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE), He put it out of His sight (cf. Isa. 38:17; Mic. 7:19, Brown, Driver, Briggs, p. 491). This same concept, though a different Hebrew word for “covering” (*caphar*), was used in the ritual of the Day of Atonement (covering), where blood placed on the “mercy seat” covered Israel’s sins (i.e., Leviticus 16). A related biblical metaphor would be to erase (cf. Isa. 1:18; 43:25) or blot out (cf. Acts 3:19; Col. 2:14; Rev. 3:5) one’s sin.

4:8 “Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account” This is a quote from Ps. 32:2. It is the term “reckon,” “impute,” or “deposit to another’s account,” used in a negative sense. God does not impute sin (DOUBLE NEGATIVE) into a believer’s spiritual bank account; He imputes righteousness. This is based on God’s gracious character, gift, and pronouncement, not human merit, achievement or worth!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:9-12

‘Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, “FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.”¹⁰How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;¹¹and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,¹²and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

4:9-12 Paul possibly included this discussion of circumcision because of the Judaizers’ emphasis on the necessity of circumcision for salvation (cf. the book of Galatians and the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15).

Paul, trained in rabbinical exegesis, knew that in Gen. 15:6 and Ps. 32:2 the same VERB appears (both in Hebrew text and Greek Septuagint). This would have united these passages for theological purposes.

4:9 The question of v. 9 expects a “no” answer. God accepts all people, even Gentiles, by faith. Genesis 15:6 is quoted again. Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, was reckoned righteous (cf. Genesis 15) before the Law of Moses (v. 13) and before he was circumcised (cf. Genesis 17).

4:10-11 “the sign of circumcision, a seal of righteousness of faith” After Abraham had been called and reckoned as righteous, God gave him circumcision as a covenant sign (Gen. 17:9-14). All the peoples of the Ancient Near East were circumcised except the Philistines who were of Greek origin from the Aegean Islands. Circumcision, for them, was a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. In Jewish life it was a religious symbol of covenant membership, performed on males on the eighth day after birth.

In this verse “sign” and “seal” are parallel and both refer to Abraham’s faith. Circumcision was a visible mark of one who exercised faith in God. The GENITIVE phrase “of the righteousness of faith” is repeated in v. 13. The key to being declared right with a holy God was not circumcision, but faith.

4:11 “that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised” The book of Romans was written after the book of Galatians. Paul was sensitive to the Jewish tendency of trusting in (1) their racial lineage (cf. Matt. 3:9; John 8:33,37,39) and (2) the performance of the current Jewish interpretations of the Mosaic covenant (The Oral Tradition, or the tradition of the elders which was later written down and was called the Talmud). Therefore, he used Abraham as the paradigm of all who believe by faith (father of believing, uncircumcised Gentiles, cf. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:29).

▣ **“seal”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SEAL

A seal may have been an ancient way of showing

1. truth (cf. John 3:33)
2. ownership (cf. John 6:27; II Tim. 2:19; Rev. 7:2-3)
3. security or protection (cf. Gen. 4:15; Matt. 27:66; Rom. 15:28; II Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30)
4. it may also be a sign of the reality of God’s promise of a gift (cf. Rom. 4:11 and I Cor. 9:2)

The purpose of this seal is to identify God’s people so that the wrath of God will not affect them. Satan’s seal identifies his people, who are the object of God’s wrath. In Revelation “tribulation” (i.e.

thlipsis) is always unbelievers persecuting believers, while wrath/anger (i.e. *orgē* or *thumos*) is always God's judgment on unbelievers so that they might repent and turn to faith in Christ. This positive purpose of judgment can be seen in covenant curses/blessings of Deuteronomy 27-28.

4:12 “follow in the steps” This was a military term (*stoicheō*) for soldiers marching in single file (cf. Acts 21:24; Gal. 5:25; 6:16; Phil. 3:16). Paul is speaking in this verse of Jews (“father of circumcision”) who believe. Abraham is the father of all who exercise faith in God and His promises.

Because of the double ARTICLE (*tois*) it is possible that this second aspect (“following in the steps of”) adds the concept of lifestyle faith (PRESENT MIDDLE [deponent] PARTICIPLE) and not a once-only faith. Salvation is an ongoing relationship, not just a decision or volitional moment.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:13-15

¹³For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified; ¹⁵for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

4:13 “the promise to Abraham or to his descendants” God made the promise of “land and seed” to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-6; 17:1-8; 22:17-18). The OT focused on the land (Palestine), but the NT focused on “the seed” (Jesus the Messiah, cf. Gal. 3:16,19), but here “seed” refers to faith people (cf. Gal. 3:29). God's promises are the basis of all believers' faith (cf. Gal. 3:14,17,18,19, 21, 22,29; 4:28; Heb. 5:13-18).

▣ **“that he would be heir of the world”** This universal statement is very significant in light of Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18 and Exod. 19:5-6. God called Abraham to call all mankind (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:15)! Abraham and his descendants were to be a means of revelation to the whole world. This is another way of referring to the Kingdom of God on earth (cf. Matt. 6:10).

▣ **“not through the Law”** The Mosaic Law had not yet been revealed. This phrase was put first in the Greek sentence to express its importance. This was a very important point which emphasizes the difference between human effort and divine grace (cf. 3:21-31). Grace has made the law obsolete as a way of salvation (cf. Heb. 8:7, 13). See Special Topic: Paul's Views of the Mosaic Law at 13:9.

4:14 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Paul was using this startling statement to make his logical argument. This is a good example of a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL used for rhetorical emphasis. He did not believe this statement to be true, but stated it to show its obvious fallacy (cf. v. 2).

Racial Jews with the visible sign of circumcision are not to be the heirs of the world, but those who exercise faith in God's will and word are heirs. Physical circumcision is not the true covenant sign, but faith (cf. 2:28-29).

▣
NASB, NKJV “faith is made void”
NRSV “faith is null”
TEV “man's faith means nothing”
NJB “faith becomes pointless”

This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE of *kenoō*, which emphasizes a settled condition of a strong Greek VERB that means “to empty,” “to show to be without foundation,” even “to falsify” (cf. I Cor. 1:17). This term was also used by Paul in I Cor. 1:17; 9:15; II Cor. 9:3 and Phil. 2:7.



NASB **“the promise is nullified”**
NKJV **“the promise is made of no effect”**
NRSV **“the promise is void”**
TEV **“God’s promise is worthless”**
NJB **“the promise is worth nothing”**

This is also a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, which emphasizes a settled condition of a strong Greek VERB that means “to make empty,” “to abrogate,” “to bring to an end,” and even “to destroy or annihilate.” This term was also used by Paul in Rom. 3:3,31; 6:6; 7:2,6; I Cor. 2:6; 13:8; 15:24,26; II Cor. 3:7; Gal. 5:4; II Thess. 2:8. There is an obvious parallelism in this verse. There are not two ways to salvation. The new covenant of grace has made the old covenant of works null and void! See Special Topic: Null and Void at 3:3.

4:15 “the Law. . .law” The first use of this term has the Greek ARTICLE, while the second does not. Although it is dangerous to draw too much attention to the presence or absence of the Greek ARTICLE, it seems in this case to help show that Paul was using this term in two senses.

1. the Mosaic Law with its Oral Tradition in which some Jews were trusting for their salvation
2. the concept of law in general

This wider sense would include the self-righteous Gentiles who conformed to this or that cultural code of ethics or religious rituals and felt accepted by deity based on their performance.

▣ **“the Law brings about wrath”** This is a shocking statement (cf. 3:20; Gal. 3:10-13; Col. 2:14). The Mosaic Law was never meant to be a way of salvation (cf. Gal. 3:23-29). This would have been a very hard truth for any Jew (or legalist) to understand or accept, but it is the basis of Paul’s argument. See Special Topic at 13:9.

▣ **“but where there is no law, neither is there violation”** God holds mankind accountable for the light they have. Gentiles will not be judged by the Mosaic Law which they never heard. They were accountable to natural revelation (cf. 1:19-20; 2:14-15).

This truth is taken one step further in Paul’s argument here. Before the Mosaic Law clearly revealed God, He did not record mankind’s violations (cf. 3:20,25; 4:15; 5:13,20; 7:5,7-8; Acts 14:16; 17:30; I Cor. 15:56).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:16-25

¹⁶For this reason it is by faith, in order that it *may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, 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, ¹⁷(as it is written, “A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU”) in the presence of Him whom he believed, *even God*, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist. ¹⁸In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, “SO SHALL YOUR DESCENDANTS BE.” ¹⁹Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb; ²⁰yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹and

being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. ²²Therefore also IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. ²³Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, ²⁴but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

4:16 This is a beautiful summary of Paul's argument from v. 14,

1. humans must respond by faith
2. to God's grace promise
3. the promise was certain to all descendants (Jew and Gentile) of Abraham who exercise faith
4. Abraham was the paradigm of all who are of faith



NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NIV "guaranteed"

NKJV "sure"

REB "valid"

NET "certain"

See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GUARANTEE

This is the Greek term *bebaios*, which has three connotations.

1. that which is sure, certain, or able to be relied on (cf. Rom. 4:16; II Cor. 1:7; Heb. 2:20; 3:6,14; 6:19; II Pet. 1:10,19).
2. the process by which something's trustworthiness is shown or established (cf. Rom. 15:8; Heb. 2:2, cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Vol. 1, pp. 340,377,670).
3. in the papyri it became a technical term for a legal guarantee (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 107-8).

This would be the antithesis of v. 14. God's promises are sure!

▣ "all. . .all" These refer to all believers (Jew and Gentile).

4:17-23 Paul again used Abraham to show the priority of (1) God's initiating grace promises (covenant) and (2) mankind's required initial faith and continuing faith response (covenant, see note at 1:5). Covenants always involve the acts of two parties.

4:17 "As it is written, 'A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS'" This is a quote from Gen. 17:5. The Septuagint (LXX) has "Gentiles." God has always wanted the redemption of all the children of Adam (cf. Gen. 3:15), not just the children of Abraham. Abram's new name, Abraham, means "a father of a multitude." Now we know it includes not just physical descendants, but faith descendants.

▣ "who gives life to the dead" In context this refers to the regenerated sexual powers of Abraham and Sarah (cf. v. 19).

▣ **“calls into being that which does not exist”** In context this refers to the pregnancy of Sarah with Isaac, but it also denotes a crucial aspect of faith (cf. Heb. 11:1).

4:18

NASB “in hope against hope he believed”

NKJV “who, contrary to hope, in hope believed”

NRSV “hoping against hope, he believed”

TEV “Abraham believed and hoped, even when there was no reason for hoping”

NJB “Though there seemed no hope, he hoped and believed”

The Special Topic on “hope” is found at 12:12. The term has a wide semantical field. Harold K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 133, lists several usages.

1. basic meaning, hope (cf. Rom. 5:4; Acts 24:15)
2. the object of hope (cf. Rom. 8:24; Gal. 5:5)
3. the author or source (cf. Col. 1:27; I Tim. 1:1)
4. trust, confidence (cf. I Pet. 1:21)
5. in security with a guarantee (cf. Acts 2:26; Rom. 8:20)

In this context hope is used in two different senses. Hope in human ability and power (cf. vv. 19-21) versus hope in God’s promise (cf. v. 17).

▣

NASB, NKJV “So shall your descendants be”

NRSV “So numerous shall your descendants be”

TEV “your descendants will be many”

NJB “your descendants will be as many as the stars”

This is a quote from Gen. 15:5 that emphasized the surety of God’s promise to Abraham about a son (cf. vv. 19-22). Remember that Isaac was born

1. thirteen years after the promise
2. after Abraham tried to give Sarah away (twice, cf. Gen. 12:10-19; 20:1-7)
3. after Abraham had a son with Hagar, Sarah’s Egyptian handmaid (cf. Gen. 16:1-16)
4. after both Sarah (cf. Gen. 18:12) and Abraham (cf. Gen. 17:17) laughed at the promise

Abraham and Sarah did not have perfect faith! Thank God, salvation does not require perfect faith, but only the proper object (God in the OT and His Son in the NT).

4:19 “he contemplated” This translation follows MSS **ℵ**, A, B, C. But some ancient uncial manuscripts add a negative PARTICLE (*ou*), D, F, G. The UBS⁴ is not able to make a decision (“C” rating), but prints the shorter text. The NET Bible also supports the shorter text.

4:20 Initially Abraham did not fully understand the promise, that the child would come from Sarah. Even Abraham’s faith was not perfect. God accepts and deals with imperfect faith because He loves imperfect people!

▣ **“he did not waver in unbelief”** This same VERB, *diakrinō*, is used by Jesus in Matt. 21:21; Mark 11:23. Abraham had reasons (cf. v. 19) to question God’s word (promise), but instead he grew strong.

The two VERBS in v. 20 are both AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVES. The PASSIVE VOICE implies the agency of God, but Abraham had to allow (covenant) God’s power to energize him!

▣ **“giving glory to God”** See Special Topic at 3:23.

4:21

NASB “being fully assured”

NKJV, NRSV “being fully convinced”

TEV “was absolutely sure”

NJB “fully convinced”

This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which denotes a full assurance of something (cf. Luke 1:1; Col. 4:12) or someone (cf. Rom. 4:21; 14:5). The NOUN is used of full assurance in Col. 2:2 and I Thess. 1:5. This confidence in God’s will, word, and power enables humans to act in faith!

▣ **“what God had promised, He was able also to perform”** This is a PERFECT MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE, which meant an action in the past has come to consummation and issues into a state of being. The essence of faith is that one trusts in the character and promises of God (cf. 16:25; Eph. 3:20; Jude 24) and not in human performance. Faith trusts in the God of promises (cf. Isa. 55:11).

4:22 This is an allusion to Gen. 15:6 (cf. v. 3), which is the key theological point of Paul’s argument about how God gives His own righteousness to sinful humans.

4:23-25 These verses are one sentence in Greek. Notice the progression.

1. for Abraham’s sake, v. 23
2. for all believers’ sake, v. 24
3. by God raising Jesus, v. 24
4. Jesus was given for our sin (cf. John 3:16), Jesus was raised for our sins to be forgiven (justification), v. 25

4:24 Abraham’s faith became a pattern for all true descendants to follow. Abraham believed (see Special Topic at 4:5) God about a promised son and descendants. New Covenant believers believe that Jesus the Messiah is the fulfillment of all of God’s promises to fallen mankind.

The term “seed” is both SINGULAR and PLURAL (a son, a people).

▣ For “raised” see note at 8:11.

4:25 **“who was delivered over because of our transgressions”** This was a legal term which meant “to hand one over for punishment.” Verse 25 is a wonderful Christological statement reflecting the Septuagint (LXX) of Isa. 53:11-12.

▣ **“was raised because of our justification”** The two clauses of v. 25 are parallel (same PREPOSITION and both are AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVES), but for stylistic not theological reasons (cf. 5:9-10; II Cor. 13:4). Frank Stagg’s translation (*New Testament Theology*, p. 97) “delivered because of our transgressions and raised with a view to our being made righteous” has much to commend it. This interpretation involves the two aspects of Paul’s use of the term “justify” (1) a forensic (legal) standing and (2) a godly, Christlike life! See Special Topic at 1:17.

The resurrection of Jesus is a central theological truth for Paul (cf. 1:3-4; 4:24-25; 6:4,9; 7:4; 8:11,34; 10:9; I Cor. 6:14; 15:3-11,20-23; II Cor. 1:9; 4:14; 5:15; 13:4; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 2:20; Col. 2:12; I Thess. 1:10; II Tim. 2:8). The tomb is empty or Christianity is a lie (cf. I Cor. 15:12-19)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is this section of Romans so important?
2. Why did Paul use Abraham and David as examples?
3. Define the following key words, according to Paul's usage (not your definition)
 - a. "righteousness"
 - b. "reckoned"
 - c. "faith"
 - d. "promise"
4. Why was circumcision so important to the Jews (vv. 9-12)?
5. To whom does "the seed" refer to in verses 13 and 16?

ROMANS 5

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Results of Justification	Faith Triumphs in Trouble	Consequences of Justification	Right With God	Faith Guarantees Salvation
5:1-11	5:1-5	5:1-5	5:1-5	5:1-11
	Christ in Our Place			
	5:6-11	5:6-11	5:6-11	
Adam and Christ	Death in Adam, Life in Christ	Adam and Christ; Analogy and Contrast	Adam and Christ	Adam and Jesus Christ
5:12-14	5:12-21	5:12-14	5:12-14b 5:14c-17	5:12-14
5:15-21		5:15-17 5:18-21	5:18-19 5:20-21	5:15-21

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Verses 1-11 are one sentence in Greek. They develop Paul's pivotal concept of "Justification by grace through Faith" (cf. 3:21-4:25).

B. Possible outlines of vv. 1-11:

Verses 1-5	Verses 6-8	Verses 9-11
1. The Benefits of Salvation	1. The Basis for Salvation	1. The Future Certainty of Salvation
2. Subjective Experiences of Justification	2. Objective Facts of Justification	2. Future Certainty of Justification
3. Justification	3. Progressive Sanctification	3. Glorification
4. Anthropology	4. Theology	4. Eschatology

C. Verses 12-21 are a discussion of Jesus as the second Adam (cf. I Cor. 15:21-22, 45-49; Phil. 2:6-8). It gives emphasis to the theological concepts of both individual sin and corporate guilt. Paul's development of mankind's (and creation's) fall in Adam was so unique and different from the rabbis (who developed their doctrine of sin from Genesis 6), while his view of corporality was very much in line with rabbinical teaching. It showed Paul's ability under inspiration to use or supplement the truths he was taught during his training in Jerusalem under Gamaliel (cf. Acts 22:3).

The Reformed Evangelical doctrine of original sin from Genesis 3 was developed by Augustine and Calvin. It basically asserts that humans are born sinful (total depravity). Often Psalm 51:5; 58:3; and Job 15:14; 25:4 are used as OT proof-texts. The alternate theological position that humans are progressively, morally and spiritually, responsible for their own choices and destiny was developed by Pelagius and Arminius. There is some evidence for their view in Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:15; and Jonah 4:11; John 9:41; 15:22,24; Acts 17:30; Rom. 4:15. The thrust of this theological position would be that children are innocent until an age of moral responsibility (for the rabbis this was 13 years old for boys and 12 years old for girls).

There is a mediating position in which both an innate evil propensity and an age of moral responsibility are both true! Evil is not only corporate, but a developing evil of the individual self to sin (life progressively more and more apart from God). The wickedness of humanity is not the issue (cf. Gen. 6:5,11-12,13; Rom. 3:9-18,23), but the when, at birth or later in life?

D. There have been several theories about the implications of v. 12

1. all people die because all people choose to sin (Pelagius)
2. Adam's sin affected the entire creation and, thereby, all die (vv. 18-19, Augustine)
3. in reality it is probably a combination of original sin and volitional sin

E. Paul's comparison "just as" begun in v. 12 is not finished until v. 18. Verses 13-17 form a parenthesis which is so characteristic of Paul's writings.

F. Remember Paul's presentation of the gospel, 1:18-8:39, is one sustained argument. The whole must be seen in order to properly interpret and appreciate the parts.

G. Martin Luther has said of chapter 5, "In the whole Bible there is hardly another chapter which can equal this triumphant text."

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-5

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; ⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

5:1 “therefore” This word often signaled

1. the summary of the theological argument up to this point
2. the conclusions based on this theological presentation
3. the presentation of new truth (cf. 5:1; 8:1; 12:1)

▣ **“having been justified”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE; God has justified believers. This is placed first in the Greek sentence (vv. 1-2) for emphasis. There seems to be a time sequence in vv. 1-11.

1. vv. 1-5, our current experience of grace
2. vv. 6-8, Christ’s finished work on our behalf
3. vv. 9-11, our future hope and assurance of salvation

See outline, B. in Contextual Insights.

The OT background (remember the NT authors are Hebrew thinkers writing in street Greek) of the term “justified” (*dikaioō*) was a “straight edge” or “measuring reed.” It came to be used metaphorically of God Himself. See Special Topic: Righteousness at 1:17. God’s character, holiness, is the only standard of judgment (cf. LXX of Lev. 24:22; and theologically in Matt. 5:48). Because of Jesus’ sacrificial, substitutionary death (cf. Isaiah 53), believers have a legal (forensic) positional standing before God (see note at 5:2). This does not imply the believer’s lack of guilt, but rather something like amnesty. Someone else has paid the penalty (cf. II Cor. 5:21). Believers have been declared forgiven (cf. vv. 9,10).

▣ **“by faith”** Faith is the hand that accepts the gift of God (cf. v. 2; Rom. 4:1ff). Faith does not focus on the degree or intensity of the believer’s commitment or resolve (cf. Matt. 17:20), but on the character and promises of God (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). The OT word for “faith” originally referred to one in a stable standing posture. It came to be used metaphorically for someone who was loyal, dependable, and trustworthy. Faith does not focus on our faithfulness or trustworthiness, but on God’s. See Special Topic: Faith at 4:5.

▣ **“we have peace”** There is a Greek manuscript variant here. This VERB is either a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE (*echōmen*, MSS \aleph^* , A, B*, C, D) or a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE (*echomen*, MSS \aleph^1 , B², F, G). This same grammatical ambiguity is found in vv. 1, 2 & 3.

1. If it is the SUBJUNCTIVE it would be translated “let us continue enjoying peace” or “keep on enjoying peace.”
2. If it is the INDICATIVE then it would be translated “we have peace.”

The context of vv. 1-11 is not exhortation, but declaration of what believers already are and have through Christ. Therefore, the VERB is probably PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, “we have peace.” The USB⁴ gives this option an “A” rating (certain).

Many of our ancient Greek manuscripts were produced by one person reading a text and several others making copies. Words that were pronounced alike were often confused. Here is where context and sometimes the writing style and usual vocabulary of the author helps make the translation decision easier.

▣ “peace” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE (different senses)

This Greek term originally meant “binding together that which was broken.” There are three ways the NT speaks of peace:

1. an objective aspect, our peace with God through Christ (cf. Col. 1:20)
2. a subjective aspect, our being right with God (cf. John 14:27; 16:33; Phil. 4:7)
3. that God has united into one new body, through Christ, both believing Jew and Gentile (cf. Eph. 2:14-17; Col. 3:15). Once we have peace with God, it must issue in peace with others! The vertical must become the horizontal.

Newman and Nida, *A Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, p. 92, has a good comment about “peace.”

“Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament the term peace has a wide range of meaning. Basically it describes the total well-being of a person’s life; it was even adopted among the Jews as a formula of greeting (*shalom*). This term had such a profound meaning that it could also be used by the Jews as a description of the Messianic salvation. Because of this fact, there are times when it is used almost synonymously with the term rendered ‘to be in a right relation with God.’ Here the term appears to be used as a description of the harmonious relation established between man and God on the basis of God’s having put man right with himself” (p. 92).

▣ “with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” Jesus is the agency (*dia*, cf. vv. 2,9,11,17,21; of the Spirit in v. 5) which brings peace with God. Jesus is the only way to peace with God (cf. John 10:7-8; 14:6; Acts 4:12; I Tim. 2:5). For the terms in the title “Lord Jesus Christ” see notes at 1:4.

5:2 “we have obtained our introduction” This VERB IS PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE; it speaks of a past act which has been consummated and now results in a state of being.

The term “introduction” literally meant “access” or “admission” (*prosagōgē*, cf. Eph. 2:18; 3:12). It came to be used metaphorically for

1. being personally introduced to royalty
2. being brought safely into a harbor (cf. I Pet. 3:18)

This phrase contains a Greek manuscript variant. Some ancient manuscripts added “by faith” (cf. \aleph^{*2} , C, as well as some Old Latin, Vulgate, Syriac, and Coptic versions). Other manuscripts add a PREPOSITION to “by faith” (cf. \aleph^1 , A, and some Vulgate versions). However, the uncial manuscripts B, D, F, and G omit it altogether. It seems that scribes simply filled out the parallelism of 5:1 and 4:16 (twice), 19, and 20. “By faith” is Paul’s recurrent theme!

▣ “into this grace” This term (*charis*) meant God’s undeserved, no-strings-attached, unmerited love (cf. Eph. 2:4-9). It is clearly seen in Christ’s death on behalf of sinful mankind (cf. v. 8).

▣ “in which we stand” This is another PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE; literally “we stand and continue to stand.” This reflects believers’ theological position in Christ and their commitment to remain in the faith which combines the theological paradox of God’s sovereignty (cf. I Cor. 15:1) and human’s free will (cf. Eph. 6:11, 13,14).

SPECIAL TOPIC: STAND (*HISTĒMI*)

This common term is used in several theological senses in the New Testament

1. to establish
 - a. the OT Law, Rom. 3:31
 - b. one's own righteousness, Rom. 10:3
 - c. the new covenant, Heb. 10:9
 - d. a charge, II Cor. 13:1
 - e. God's truth, II Tim. 2:19
2. to resist spiritually
 - a. the devil, Eph. 6:11
 - b. in the day of judgment, Rev. 6:17
3. to resist by standing one's ground
 - a. military metaphor, Eph. 6:14
 - b. civil metaphor, Rom. 14:4
4. a position in truth, John 8:44
5. a position in grace
 - a. Rom. 5:2
 - b. I Cor. 15:1
 - c. I Pet. 5:12
6. a position in faith
 - a. Rom. 11:20
 - b. I Cor. 7:37
 - c. I Cor. 15:1
 - d. II Cor. 1:24
7. a position of arrogance, I Cor. 10:12

This term expresses both the covenantal grace and mercy of a sovereign God and the fact that believers need to respond to it and cling to it by faith! Both are biblical truths. They must be held together!

▣ **“we exult”** This grammatical form can be understood as (1) a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE, “we exult” or (2) a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) SUBJUNCTIVE, “let us exult.” Scholars are split on these options. If one takes “we have” in v. 1 as an INDICATIVE then the translation should be consistent through v. 3.

The root of the word “exult” is “boasting” (NRSV, JB). See Special Topic at 2:17. Believers do not exult in themselves (cf. 3:27), but in what the Lord has done for them (cf. Jer. 9:23-24). This same Greek root is repeated in vv. 3 and 11.

▣ **“in hope of”** Paul often used this term in several different but related senses. See note at 4:18. Often it was associated with the consummation of the believer's faith. This can be expressed as glory, eternal life, ultimate salvation, Second Coming, etc. The consummation is certain, but the time element is future and unknown. It was often associated with “faith” and “love” (cf. I Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5-6; Eph. 4:2-5; I Thess. 1:3; 5:8). A partial list of some of Paul's uses follows.

1. The Second Coming, Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18; Titus 2:13
2. Jesus is our hope, I Tim 1:1
3. The believer to be presented to God, Col. 1:22-23; I Thess. 2:19

4. Hope laid up in heaven, Col. 1:5
5. Ultimate salvation, I Thess. 4:13
6. The glory of God, Rom. 5:2; II Cor. 3:12; Col. 1:27
7. Assurance of salvation, I Thess. 5:8-9
8. Eternal life, Titus 1:2; 3:7
9. Results of Christian maturity, Rom. 5:2-5
10. Redemption of all creation, Rom. 8:20-22
11. A title for God, Rom. 15:13
12. Adoption's consummation, Rom. 8:23-25
13. OT as guide for NT believers, Rom. 15:4

SPECIAL TOPIC: ASSURANCE

- A. Can Christians know they are saved (cf. I John 5:13)? I John has three tests or evidences.
 1. Doctrinal (belief) (vv. 1,5,10; 2:18-25; 4:1-6,14-16; 5:11-12)
 2. Lifestyle (obedience) (vv. 2-3; 2:3-6; 3:1-10; 5:18)
 3. Social (love) (vv. 2-3; 2:7-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-12, 16-21)
- B. Assurance has become a denominational issue
 1. John Calvin based assurance on God's election. He said that we can never be certain in this life.
 2. John Wesley based assurance on religious experience. He believed that we have the ability to live above known sin.
 3. Roman Catholics and the Church of Christ base assurance on an authoritative Church. The group to which one belongs is the key to assurance.
 4. Most evangelicals base assurance on the promises of the Bible, linked to the fruit of the Spirit in the life of the believer (cf. Gal. 5:22-23).
- C. I think fallen mankind's primary assurance is linked to the character of the Triune God
 1. God the Father's love
 - a. John 3:16; 10:28-29
 - b. Romans 8:31-39
 - c. Ephesians 2:5,8-9
 - d. Philippians 1:6
 - e. I Peter 1:3-5
 - f. I John 4:7-21
 2. God the Son's actions
 - a. death on our behalf
 - 1) Acts 2:23
 - 2) Romans 5:6-11
 - 3) II Corinthians 5:21
 - 4) I John 2:2; 4:9-10
 - b. high priestly prayer (John 17:12)
 - c. continuing intercession
 - 1) Romans 8:34

- 2) Hebrews 7:25
- 3) I John 2:1
- 3. God the Spirit's ministry
 - a. calling (John 6:44,65)
 - b. sealing
 - 1) II Corinthians 1:22; 5:5
 - 2) Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:3
 - c. assuring
 - 1) Romans 8:16-17
 - 2) I John 5:7-13
- D. But humans must respond to God's covenant offer (both initially and continually)
 - 1. believers must turn from sin (repentance) and to God through Jesus (faith)
 - a. Mark 1:15
 - b. Acts 3:16,19; 20:21
 - 2. believers must receive God's offer in Christ
 - a. John 1:12; 3:16
 - b. Romans 5:1 (and by analogy 10:9-13)
 - c. Ephesians 2:5,8-9
 - 3. believers must continue in the faith
 - a. Mark 13:13
 - b. I Corinthians 15:2
 - c. Galatians 6:9
 - d. Hebrews 3:14
 - e. II Peter 1:10
 - f. Jude 20-21
 - g. Revelation 2:2-3,7,10,17,19,25-26; 3:5,10,11,21
 - 4. believers face three tests
 - a. doctrinal (vv. 1,5,10; 2:18-25; 4:1-6,14-16)
 - b. lifestyle (vv. 2-3; 2:3-6; 3:1-10)
 - c. social (vv. 2-3; 2:7-11; 3:11-18; 4:7-12, 16-21)
- E. Assurance is difficult because
 - 1. often believers seek certain experiences not promised in the Bible
 - 2. often believers do not fully understand the gospel
 - 3. often believers continue to willfully sin (cf. I Cor. 3:10-15; 9:27; I Tim. 1:19-20; II Tim. 4:10; II Pet. 1:8-11)
 - 4. certain personality types (i.e. perfectionists) can never accept God's unconditional acceptance and love
 - 5. in the Bible there are examples of false professions (cf. Matt. 13:3-23; 7:21-23; Mark 4:14-20; II Pet. 2:19-20; I John 2:18-19)

▣ **“glory of God”** This phrase is an OT idiom for the personal presence of God. This referred to the believer’s standing before God in the faith-righteousness provided by Jesus on Resurrection Day (cf. II Cor. 5:21). It is often called by the theological term “glorification” (cf. vv. 9-10; 8:30). Believers will share the likeness of Jesus (cf. I John 3:2; II Pet. 1:4). See Special Topic: Glory at 3:23.

5:3

NASB “and not only this, but”

NKJV “and not only *that*, but”

NRSV “and not only that, but”

TEV –omit–

NJB “not only that”

Paul uses this combination of terms several times (cf. 5:3,11; 8:23; 9:10, and II Cor. 8:19).

▣

NASB “we also exult in our tribulations”

NKJV “we also glory in tribulations”

NRSV “we also boast in our sufferings”

TEV “we also boast in our troubles”

NJB “let us exult, too, in our hardships”

If the world hated Jesus, it will hate His followers (cf. Matt. 10:22; 24:9; John 15:18-21). Jesus was matured, humanly speaking, by the things He suffered (cf. Heb. 5:8). Suffering produces trust and maturity.

Christlikeness is the plan of God for every believer, suffering is part of it (cf. 8:17-19; Acts 14:22; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 4:12-19)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY DO CHRISTIANS SUFFER?

1. Because of personal sin (temporal judgment). This does not imply that all problems and negative circumstances are a result of sin (cf. Job; Ps. 73; Luke 14:1-5; Neh. 9; Acts 5:1-11; I Cor. 11:29-30; Gal. 6:7).
2. To develop Christlikeness (Heb. 5:8). Even Jesus, humanly speaking, had to be matured, so too, His followers (cf. Rom. 5:3-4, 8:28-29; II Cor. 12:7-10; Phil. 3:10; Heb. 12:5-12; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 1:7).
3. To develop a powerful, effective witness (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-22; I Pet. 2:18-21, 3:13-17).
4. As a sign of the birth pains of the New Age (cf. Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:8).

▣ **“knowing”** This is a PERFECT PARTICIPLE, of “*oida*.” It is PERFECT in form, but it functions as a PRESENT TENSE. Believers’ understanding of the truths of the gospel as they relate to suffering allows them to face life with a joy and confidence which is not dependent on circumstances, even during persecution (cf. Phil. 4:4; I Thess. 5:16,18). Believers exult “in” tribulations, not “because of” them!

5:3 “tribulation” See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TRIBULATION

There needs to be a theological distinction between Paul's use of this term (*thlipsis*) and John's.

A. Paul's usage (which reflects Jesus' usage)

1. problems, sufferings, evil involved in a fallen world
 - a. Matt. 13:21
 - b. Rom. 5:3
 - c. I Cor. 7:28
 - d. II Cor. 7:4
 - e. Eph. 3:13
2. problems, sufferings, evil caused by unbelievers
 - a. Rom. 5:3; 8:35; 12:12
 - b. II Cor. 1:4,8; 6:4; 7:4; 8:2,13
 - c. Eph. 3:13
 - d. Phil. 4:14
 - e. I Thess. 1:6
 - f. II Thess. 1:4
3. problems, sufferings, evil of the end-time
 - a. Matt. 24:21,29
 - b. Mark 13:19,24
 - c. II Thess. 1:6-9

B. John's usage

1. John makes a specific distinction between *thlipsis* and *orgē* or *thumos* (wrath) in Revelation. *Thlipsis* is what unbelievers do to believers and *orgē* and *thumos* is what God does to unbelievers.
 - a. *thlipsis* - Rev. 1:9; 2:9-10,22; 7:14
 - b. *orgē* - Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 16:19; 19:15
 - c. *thumos* - Rev. 12:12; 14:8,10,19; 15:2,7; 16:1; 18:3
2. John also uses the term in his Gospel to reflect problems believers face in every age - John 16:33.

5:3,4 "perseverance" This term meant "voluntary," "active," "steadfast," "endurance." It was a term that related to both patience with people, as well as with circumstances. See Special Topic at 8:25.

5:4

NASB "proven character"

NKJV, NRSV "character"

TEV "God's approval"

NJB "tested character"

In the LXX of Gen. 23:16; I Kgs. 10:18; I Chr. 28:18 this term was used of testing metals for purity and genuineness (cf. II Cor. 2:9; 8:2; 9:13; 13:3; Phil. 2:22; II Tim. 2:15; James 1:12). God's tests are always for strengthening (cf. Heb. 12:10-11)! See Special Topic: Testing at 2:18.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Romans 5:3-4

Tribulation Causes

- * perseverance
- * proven character
- * hope (cf. v. 2)

Galatians 5:22-23

Fruit of the Spirit

- * love
- * joy
- * peace
- *patience
- * kindness
- * goodness
- * faithfulness
- *gentleness
- * self-control

James 1:3-4

Testing Produces

- * endurance
- * maturity
- 1. steadfastness
- 2. complete

II Peter 1:5-7

Applying Diligence

- *moral excellence
- * knowledge
- * self-control
- * perseverance
- * godliness
- *brotherly kindness
(*philadelphia*)
- * Christian love
(*agapē*)

5:5 “hope does not disappoint” This may be an allusion to an Hebrew idiom (i.e., shame, cf. Ps. 25:3,20; 31:1,17; 119:116; Isa. 28:16 [quoted in Rom. 9:33]; Phil. 1:20).

▣ **“because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE; literally, “God’s love has been and continues to be poured out.” This VERB was often used of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 2:17,18,33; 10:45 and Titus 3:6), which may reflect Joel 2:28-29 (Isa. 32:15).

The GENITIVE PHRASE, “the love of God” grammatically can refer to (1) our love for God or (2) God’s love for us (cf. John 3:16; II Cor. 5:14). Number two is the only contextual option.

▣ **“the Holy Spirit that was given to us”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. The PASSIVE VOICE is often used to express God’s agency. This implies that believers do not need more of the Spirit. They either have the Spirit or they are not Christians (cf. 8:9). The giving of the Spirit was the sign of the New Age (cf. Joel 2:28-29), the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-32).

▣ Notice the presence of the three divine persons of the Trinity in this paragraph.

1. God, vv. 1,2,5,8,10
2. Jesus, vv. 1,6,8,9,10
3. the Spirit, v. 5

See Special Topic: The Trinity at 8:11.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:6-11

⁶For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰For if while 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. ¹¹And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

5:6

- NASB** “for while we were still helpless”
- NKJV** “for when we were still without strength”
- NRSV** “for while we were still weak”
- TEV** “for when we were still helpless”
- NJB** “when we were still helpless”

This VERB is a PRESENT PARTICIPLE. This referred to mankind’s fallen Adamic nature. Humans are powerless against sin. The PRONOUN “we” explains and parallels the descriptive NOUN in v. 6b “ungodly,” v. 8 “sinners,” and v. 10 “enemies.” Verses 6 and 8 are theologically and structurally parallel.

Note the parallelism:

	①	②	③
v. 6	we were helpless	Christ died for the ungodly	---
v. 8	we were sinners	Christ died for us	---
v. 9	---	by His blood	having now been justified
v. 10	we were enemies	the death of His Son	have received the reconciliation

The main truths are repeated for emphasis.

1. our need
2. Christ’s provision
3. our new standing

▣

- NASB, NRSV** “at the right time”
- NKJV** “in due time”
- TEV** “at the time that God chose”
- NJB** “at his appointed moment”

This could refer historically to

1. the Roman peace (and roads) allowing free travel
2. the Greek language allowing cross cultural communication
3. the demise of the Greek and Roman gods producing an expectant, spiritually hungry world (cf. Mark 1:15; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:10; Titus 1:3)

Theologically the incarnation was a planned, divine event (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; Eph. 1:11).

5:6,8,10 “died for the ungodly” This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE. It viewed Jesus’ life and death as a unified event. “Jesus paid a debt He did not owe and we owed a debt we could not pay” (cf. Gal. 3:13; I John 4:10).

The death of Christ was a recurrent theme in Paul's writings. He used several different terms and phrases to refer to Jesus' substitutionary death.

1. "blood" (cf. 3:25; 5:9; I Cor. 11:25,27; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20)
2. "gave Himself up" (cf. Eph. 5:2,25)
3. "delivered up" (cf. Rom. 4:25; 8:32)
4. "sacrifice" (cf. I Cor. 5:7)
5. "died" (cf. Rom. 5:6; 8:34; 14:9,15; I Cor. 8:11; 15:3; II Cor. 5:15; Gal. 5:21; I Thess. 4:14; 5:10)
6. "cross" (cf. I Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 5:11; 6:12-14; Eph. 2:16; Phil. 2:8; Col. 1:20; 2:14)
7. "crucifixion" (cf. I Cor. 1:23; 2:2; II Cor. 13:4; Gal. 3:1)

Does the PREPOSITION *huper* in this context mean

1. representation, "on our behalf"
2. substitution, "in our place"

Normally the basic meaning of *huper* with the GENITIVE is "on behalf of" (Louw and Nida). It expresses some advantage that accrues to persons (*The New International dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, p. 1196). However, *huper* does have the sense of *anti*, which denotes "in the place of," thereby theologically referring to a vicarious substitutionary atonement (cf. Mark 10:45; John 11:50; 18:14; II Cor. 5:14; I Tim. 2:6). M. J. Harris (NIDNTT, vol. 3, p. 1197) says, "but why does Paul never say that Christ died *anti hēmōn* (I Tim. 2:6 is the nearest he comes—*antilutron huper pantōn*)? Probably because the prep. *huper*, unlike *anti*, could simultaneously express representation and substitution."

M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 2, says

"It is much disputed whether *huper*, on behalf of, is ever equivalent to *anti*, instead of. The classical writers furnish instances where the meanings seem to be interchanged. . . The meaning of this passage, however, is so uncertain that it cannot fairly be cited in evidence. The preposition may have a local meaning, *over* the dead. None of these passages can be regarded as decisive. The most that can be said is that *huper* borders on the meaning of *anti*. *Instead of* is urged largely on dogmatic grounds. In the great majority of passages the sense is clearly *for the sake of, on behalf of*. The true explanation seems to be that, in the passages principally in question, those, namely, relating to Christ's death, as here, Gal. 3:13; Rom. 14:15; I Pet. 3:18, *huper* characterizes the more indefinite and general proposition—Christ died on behalf of—leaving the peculiar sense of in behalf of undetermined, and to be settled by other passages. The meaning *instead of* may be included in it, but only inferentially" (p. 692).

5:7 This verse shows human love while verse 8 shows God's love!



NASB, NKJV,

TEV "for a righteous man"

NRSV "for a righteous person"

NJB "for a good man"

This term was used in the same sense as Noah and Job were righteous or blameless men. They followed the religious requirements of their day. It does not imply sinlessness. See special topic at 1:17.

5:8 "God demonstrates His own love" This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE (cf. 3:5). The Father sent the Son (cf. 8:3,32; II Cor. 5:19). God's love is not sentimental, but action-oriented (cf. John 3:16; I John 4:10) and constant.

▣ **“in that while we were yet sinners”** It shocks us to realize that God’s love was manifest to “sinners,” not godly people or people of a particular national origin, but rebels! Grace, not merit, is the foundational truth! God still desires fellowship with humans. It is His unchanging character that gives us peace and hope (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; 145:8).

5:9 “much more” This was one of Paul’s favorite expressions (cf. vv. 10,15,17). If God loved believers so much while they were yet sinners, how much more does He love them now that they are His children (cf. 5:10; 8:22).

▣ **“having now been justified”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which emphasized justification as a completed act accomplished by God. Paul is repeating the truth of v. 1. Also note the parallelism between the terms “justified” (v. 9) and “reconciled” (vv. 10-11).

▣ **“by His blood”** This was a reference to Christ’s sacrificial death” (cf. 3:5; 4:25; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21). This concept of sacrifice, an innocent life given in place of a guilty life, goes back to Leviticus 1-7 and possibly Exodus 12 (the Passover lamb), and was theologically applied to Jesus in Isa. 53:4-6. It is developed in a Christological sense in the book of Hebrews (cf. chaps. 9-10). Hebrews in effect compares the Old and New Testament at a number of points.

▣ **“we shall be saved”** This is FUTURE PASSIVE INDICATIVE (cf. v. 10). This referred to our ultimate salvation, which is called “glorification” (cf. v. 2; 8:30, I John 3:2).

The NT describes salvation in all VERB tenses.

1. a completed act (AORIST), Acts 15:11; Rom. 8:24; II Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5
2. past act resulting in a present state (PERFECT), Eph. 2:5,8
3. progressive process (PRESENT), I Cor. 1:18; 15:2; II Cor. 2:15; I Thess. 4:14; I Pet. 3:21
4. future consummation (FUTURE), Rom. 5:9,10; 10:9.

See Special Topic at 10:4. Salvation starts with an initial decision (cf. 10:9-13; John 1:12; 3:16) but progresses into a moment-by-moment relationship that will one day be consummated. This concept is often described by the three theological terms.

1. justification, which means “being delivered from the penalty of sin”
2. sanctification, which means “being delivered from the power of sin”
3. glorification, which means “being delivered from the presence of sin”

It is worth noting that justification and sanctification are both gracious acts of God, given to the believer through faith in Christ. However the NT also speaks of sanctification as an ongoing process of Christlikeness. For this reason theologians speak of “positional sanctification” and “progressive sanctification.” This is the mystery of a free salvation linked to a godly life! See Special Topic at 6:4.

▣ **“from the wrath of God”** This is an eschatological context. The Bible tells of God’s great, undeserved, unmerited love, but also clearly tells of God’s settled opposition to sin and rebellion. God has provided a way of salvation and forgiveness through Christ, but those who reject Him are under wrath (cf. 1:18-3:20). This is an anthropomorphic phrase (see Special Topic at 1:18), but it expresses a reality. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of an angry God (Heb. 10:31).

5:10 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed true from the writer’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Humanity, God’s ultimate creation (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), became enemies! Man (cf. Gen. 3:5) had a desire for control, a desire to be gods.

▣ **“we were reconciled to God. . .having been reconciled”** This is both an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE and an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. The VERB “reconciled” (cf. I Cor. 7:11; II Cor. 5:18,19,20; also note Col. 1:20) originally meant “to exchange.” God has exchanged our sin for Jesus’ righteousness (cf. Isa. 53:4-6). Peace is restored (cf. v. 1)!

▣ **“through the death of His son”** The gospel of forgiveness is grounded in

1. the love of God (cf. John 3:16)
2. the work of Christ (8:32; Gal. 1:4; 2:20)
3. the wooing of the Spirit (John 6:44,65),
4. the faith/repentant response of an individual (Mark 1:15; John 1:12; Acts 20:21)

There is no other way to be right with God (cf. 10:1-2,7-8; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; I Tim. 2:5). Assurance of salvation is based on the character of the Triune God (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; 145:8), not human performance! The paradox is that human performance after salvation is an evidence of a free salvation (cf. James and I John).

▣ **“we shall be saved”** The NT speaks of salvation as past, present, and future. Here the future referred to our ultimate, complete salvation at the Second Coming (cf. I John 3:2). See note at v. 9 and Special Topic at 10:13.

▣ **“by His life”** This Greek term for life is *zoa*. This term in John’s writings always referred to resurrection life, eternal life, or kingdom life. Paul also used it in this theological sense. The thrust of this context is that since God paid such a high price for believers’ forgiveness He will surely continue its effectiveness.

“Life” can refer to either

1. Jesus’ resurrection (cf. 8:34; I Cor. 15)
2. Jesus’ intercessory work (cf. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; I John 2:1)
3. the Spirit forming Christ in us (cf. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19)

Paul asserted that Jesus’ earthly life and death as well as His exalted life (ascension, Acts 1) are the basis of our reconciliation.

5:11 “And not only this, but” See note at verse 3.

▣ **“we also exult”** See note at 5:2. This is the third use of “exult” (boast) in this context.

1. exult in the hope of glory, v. 2
2. exult in tribulation, v. 3
3. exult in reconciliation, v. 11

Negative boasting is seen in 2:17 and 23!

▣ **“we have now received the reconciliation”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE, a completed act. Believers’ reconciliation (“to exchange”) is also discussed in v. 10 and II Cor. 5:18-21; Eph. 2:16-22; Col. 1:19-23. In this context “reconciliation” is the theological synonym of “justification.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:12-14

¹²Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—¹³for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

5:12 “Therefore” Romans has several strategically placed “therefores” (cf. 5:1; 8:1; 12:1). The interpretive question is to what they relate. They could be a way of referring to Paul’s whole argument. For sure this one relates to Genesis and, therefore, probably back to Rom. 1:18-32.

▣ **“as through one man sin entered into the world”** All three VERBS in v. 12 are AORIST TENSE. Adam’s fall brought death (cf. I Cor. 15:22). The Bible does not dwell on the origin of sin. Sin also occurred in the angelic realm (cf. Gen. 3 and Rev. 12:7-9). How and when are uncertain (cf. Isa. 14:12-27; Ezek. 28:12-19; Job 4:18; Matt. 25:41; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; Rev. 12:7-9).

Adam’s sin involved two aspects (1) disobedience to a specific commandment (cf. Gen. 2:16-17), and (2) self-oriented pride (cf. Gen. 3:5-6). This continues the allusion to Genesis 3 begun in Rom. 1:18-32.

It is the theology of sin that so clearly separates Paul from rabbinical thought. The rabbis did not focus on Genesis 3; they asserted instead, that there were two “intents” (*yetzers*) in every person. Their famous rabbinical saying “In every man’s heart is a black and a white dog. The one you feed the most becomes the biggest.” Paul saw sin as a major barrier between holy God and His creation. Paul was not a systematic theologian (cf. James Steward’s *A Man in Christ*). He gave several origins of sin (1) Adam’s fall, (2) satanic temptation, and (3) continuing human rebellion (i.e., Eph. 2:2-3).

In the theological contrasts and parallels between Adam and Jesus two possible implications are present.

1. Adam was a real historical person.
2. Jesus was a real human being.

Both of these truths affirm the Bible in the face of false teaching. Notice the repeated use of “one man” or “the one.” These two ways of referring to Adam and Jesus are used eleven times in this context.

▣ **“one man”** This generic phrase (lit. *henos anthrōpou*) is used to represent Adam (vv. 12,16,17,18,19) or Jesus (vv. 15 [twice], 17 [twice], 18,19). They each represent a group or community (i.e., “many,” cf. vv. 15 [twice], 19[twice]; “all,” cf. vv. 12,13,18 [twice]).

▣ **“death through sin”** Augustine first coined the term “original sin.” It describes the consequences of Adam/Eve’s choices in Genesis 3. Their rebellion has affected all of creation. Humans are impacted by

1. a fallen world system
2. a personal tempter
3. a fallen nature

Original sin (vv. 12-14,16a,17) forms a partnership with personal sin (vv. 12d,16b) to make all humans sinful! Sin results in “death” (cf. 1:32; 6:13,16,21,23; 7:5,9,10,11,13,24; 8:13).

The Jerome Biblical Commentary (p. 308) mentions the rabbinical tradition that there were three periods of history.

1. Adam – Moses
2. Moses – Messiah
3. Messiah – eschaton

If Paul was thinking of these divisions then

1. Adam – Moses (original sin, no law but death)
2. Moses – Messiah (personal sin, violation of law)
3. Messiah – (freedom from the Law/law through grace)

▣ **“death spread to all men”** The major thrust of this paragraph is the universality of the consequences of sin (cf. vv. 16-19; I Cor. 15:22; Gal. 1:10), which is death.

1. spiritual death – Gen. 2:17; 3:1-24; Isa. 59:2; Rom. 7:10-11; Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13; James 1:15
2. physical death – Gen. 3:4-5; 5:1-32
3. eternal death – Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8

▣ **“because all sinned”** All humans sin in Adam corporately (i.e., inherited a sinful state and a sinful propensity.) Because of this each person chooses to sin personally and repeatedly. The Bible is emphatic that all humans are sinners both corporately and individually (cf. I Kgs. 8:46; II Chr. 6:36; Ps. 14:1-2; 130:3; 143:2; Pro. 20:9; Eccl. 7:20; Isa. 9:17; 53:6; Rom. 3:9-18,23; 5:18; 11:32; Gal. 3:22; I John 1:8-10).

Yet it must be said that the contextual emphasis (cf. vv. 15-19) is that one act caused death (Adam) and one act causes life (Jesus). However, God has so structured His relationship to humanity that human volition is a significant aspect of “lostness” and “justification.” Humans are volitionally involved in their future destinies! They continue to choose sin or they choose Christ. They cannot affect these two choices, but they do volitionally show to which they belong!

The translation “because” is common, but its meaning is often disputed. Paul used *eph’ hō* in II Cor. 5:4; Phil. 3:12; and 4:10 in the sense of “because.” Thus each and every human chooses to personally participate in sin and rebellion against God. Some by rejecting special revelation, but all by rejecting natural revelation (cf. 1:18-3:20).

5:13-14 This same truth is taught in Rom. 3:20; 4:15 and Acts 17:30. God is fair. Humans are only responsible for what is available to them. This verse is speaking exclusively of special revelation (OT, Jesus, NT), not natural revelation (Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:18-23; 2:11-16).

Notice that the NKJV sees the comparison of v. 12 as separated by a long parenthesis (cf. vv. 13-17) from its conclusion in vv. 18-21.

5:14

NASB, NKJV,

NJB “death reigned”

NRSV “death exercised dominion”

TEV “death ruled”

Death reigned as a King (cf. vv. 17 and 21). This personification of death and sin as tyrants is sustained throughout this chapter and chapter 6. The universal experience of death confirms the universal sin of mankind. In verses 17 and 21, grace is personified. Grace reigns! Humans have a choice (the two ways of the OT, i.e., death or life, cf. Deut. 11:26; 30:1,19), death or life. Who reigns in your life?

▣ **“even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offence of Adam”** Adam violated a stated command of God (i.e., Gen. 2:15-17), even Eve did not sin in this same way. She heard from Adam about the tree, not from God directly. Humans from Adam until Moses were affected by Adam’s rebellion! They did not violate a specific command from God, but 1:18-32, which is surely part of this theological context, expresses the truth that they did violate the light that they had from creation and are thereby responsible to God for rebellion/sin. Adam’s sinful propensity spread to all of his children.

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “who is a type of Him who was to come”

TEV “Adam was a figure of the one who was to come”

NJB “Adam prefigured the One to come”

This expresses in a very concrete way the Adam-Christ typology (cf. I Cor. 15:21-22,45-49; Phil. 2:6-8). Both of them are seen as the first in a series, the origin of a race (cf. I Cor. 15:45-49). Adam is the only person from the OT specifically called a “type” by the NT (for “Israel” see I Cor. 10:6). See Special Topic: Form (*Tupos*) at 6:17.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:15-17

¹⁵But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. ¹⁶The gift is not like *that which came* through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment *arose* from one *transgression* resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift *arose* from many transgressions resulting in justification. ¹⁷For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

5:15-19 This is a sustained argument using parallel phrases. The NASB, NRSV, and TEV divide the paragraph at v. 18. However UBS⁴, NKJV, and JB translate it as a unit. Remember the key to interpretation of the original author's intent is one main truth per paragraph.

Notice that the term "many," vv. 15 & 19, is synonymous with "all" in vv. 12 and 18. This is also true in Isa. 53:11-12 and v. 6. No theological distinctions (Calvin's elect versus non-elect) should be made based on these terms!

5:15 "the free gift" There are two different Greek words for "gift" used in this context—*charisma*, vv. 15,16 (6:23) and *dorea/dorama*, vv. 15, 16, 17 (see note at 3:24)—but they are synonymous. This is really the Good News about salvation. It is a free gift from God through Jesus Christ (cf. 3:24; 6:23; Eph. 2:8,9) to all who believe in Christ.

▣ **"if"** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Adam's sin brought death to all humans. This is paralleled in v. 17.

▣ **"abound"** See Special Topic at 15:13.

5:16 "condemnation...justification" Both of these are forensic, legal terms. Often the OT presented the prophet's message as a court scene. Paul uses this form (cf. Rom. 8:1, 31-34).

5:17 "if" This is another FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. The transgression of Adam did result in the death of all humans.

▣ **"much more those who receive"** Verses 18-19 are not exactly theologically balanced. This phrase cannot be removed from the context of Romans 1-8 and used as a proof-text for universalism (that all will be saved eventually). Humans must receive (v. 17b) God's offer in Christ. Salvation is available to all, but must be accepted individually (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13).

Adam's one act of rebellion issued in the total rebellion of all humans. The one sinful act is magnified! But in Christ one righteous sacrifice is magnified to cover the many individual sins as well as the corporate affect of sin. The "much more" of Christ's act is emphasized (cf. vv. 9,10,15,17). Grace abounds!

5:17,18 "the gift of righteousness will reign in life. . justification of life" Jesus is God's gift and provision for all of fallen mankind's spiritual needs (cf. I Cor. 1:30). These parallel phrases can mean

1. sinful mankind is given right standing with God through Christ's finished work which results in a "godly life"
2. this phrase is synonymous to "eternal life"

The context supports the first option. For a word study on righteousness see special topic at 1:17.

The VERB “reign” is used several times in this context.

1. “death reigned from Adam to Moses,” v. 14 (AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE)
2. “death reigned through the one,” v. 17 (AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE)
3. “much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life,” v. 17 (FUTURE ACTIVE INDICATIVE)
4. “sin reigned in death,” v. 21 (AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE)
5. “grace would reign,” v. 21 (AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE)
6. “do not let sin reign,” 6:12 (PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE)

Paul’s personification of sin and death versus the gift of grace is a powerful way to express the theological truth!

SPECIAL TOPIC: REIGNING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The concept of reigning with Christ is part of the larger theological category called “the Kingdom of God.” This is a carry-over from the OT concept of God as the true king of Israel (cf. I Sam. 8:7). He symbolically reigned (I Sam. 8:7; 10:17-19) through a descendant from the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10) and the family of Jesse (cf. II Samuel 7).

Jesus is the promised fulfillment of OT prophecy concerning the Messiah. He inaugurated the Kingdom of God with His incarnation at Bethlehem. The Kingdom of God became the central pillar of Jesus’ preaching. The Kingdom had fully come in Him (cf. Matt: 10:7; 11:12; 12:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9,11; 11:20; 16:16; 17:20-21).

However, the Kingdom was also future (eschatological). It was present but not consummated (cf. Matt. 6:10; 8:11; 16:28; 22:1-14; 26:29; Luke 9:27; 11:2; 13:29; 14:10-24; 22:16,18). Jesus came the first time as a suffering servant (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12); as humble (cf. Zech. 9:9) but He will return as King of Kings (cf. Matt. 2:2; 21:5; 27:11-14). The concept of “reigning” is surely a part of this “kingdom” theology. God has given the kingdom to Jesus’ followers (see Luke 12:32).

The concept of reigning with Christ has several aspects and questions.

1. Do the passages which assert that God has given believers “the kingdom” through Christ refer to “reigning” (cf. Matt. 5:3,10; Luke 12:32)?
2. Do Jesus’ words to the original disciples in the first century Jewish context refer to all believers (cf. Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:28-30)?
3. Does Paul’s emphasis on reigning in this life now contrast or complement the above texts (cf. Rom. 5:17; I Cor. 4:8)?
4. How are suffering and reigning related (cf. Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:11-12; I Pet. 4:13; Rev. 1:9)?
5. The recurrent theme of Revelation is sharing the glorified Christ’s reign, but that reign is
 - a. earthly, 5:10
 - b. millennial, 20:5,6
 - c. eternal, 2:26; 3:21; 22:5 and Dan. 7:14,18,27

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:18-21

¹⁸So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. ²⁰The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

5:18

NASB	“even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men”
NKJV	“even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men”
NRSV	“so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all”
TEV	“in the same way the one righteous act set all men free and gives them life”
NJB	“so the good act of one man brings everyone life and makes them justified”

This is not saying that everyone will be saved (universalism). This verse can not be interpreted apart from the message of the book of Romans and the immediate context. This is referring to the potential salvation of all humans through Jesus’ life/death/resurrection. Mankind must respond to the gospel offer by repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). God always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44,65), but He has chosen that each individual must respond personally (cf. Matt. 11:28-29; John 1:12; 3:16; and Rom. 10:9-13). His offer is universal (cf. I Tim. 2:4,6; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2), but the mystery of iniquity is that many say “no.”

The “act of righteousness” is either

1. Jesus’ entire life of obedience and teaching fully revealed the Father
2. specifically His death on sinful mankind’s behalf

As one man’s life affected all (Jewish corporality, cf. Joshua 7), so too, one innocent life affected all (Leviticus 1-7,16). These two acts are parallel, but not equal. All are affected by Adam’s sin but all are only potentially affected by Jesus’ life, only believers who receive the gift of justification. Jesus’ act also affects all human sin, for those who believe and receive, past, present, and future!

5:18-19 “condemnation to all men. . .justification of life to all men. . .the many were made sinners. . .the many will be made righteous” These are parallel phrases which show that the term “many” is not restrictive but inclusive. This same parallelism is found in Isa. 53:6 “all” and 53:11,12 “many.” The term “many” cannot be used in a restrictive sense to limit God’s offer of salvation to all mankind (Calvin’s elect versus non-elect).

Notice the **PASSIVE VOICE** of the two **VERBS**. They refer to the activity of God. Humans sin in relationship to God’s character (a standard violated) and they are justified in relation to His character (a gift of His grace).

5:19 “one man’s disobedience. . .the obedience of the One” Paul was using the theological concept of Old Testament corporality. One person’s acts affected the whole community (cf. Achan in Joshua 7). Adam and Eve’s disobedience brought about the judgment of God on all creation (cf. Genesis 3). All creation has been affected by the consequences of Adam’s rebellion (cf. 8:18-25). The world is not the same. Humans are not the same. Death became the end of all earthly life (cf. Genesis 5). This is not the world that God intended it to be!

In this same corporate sense Jesus’ one act of obedience, Calvary, resulted in (1) a new age, (2) a new people, and (3) a new covenant. This representative theology is called “the Adam-Christ typology” (cf. Phil. 2:6). Jesus is the second Adam. He is the new beginning for the fallen human race.

▣ **“made righteous”** See Special Topic at 1:17.

5:20

NASB	“And the Law came in that the transgression might increase”
NKJV	“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound”
NRSV	“But law came in, with the result and the trespass multiplied”
TEV	“Law was introduced in order to increase wrongdoing”

NJB “When law came, it was to multiply the opportunities of falling”

The purpose of the Law was never to save mankind but to show fallen mankind’s need and helplessness (cf. Eph. 2:1-3) and thereby bring them to Christ (cf. 3:20; 4:15; 7:5; Gal. 3:19, 23-26). The Law is good, but mankind is sinful (cf. Romans 7)!

▣ **“grace abounded all the more”** This was Paul’s main thrust in this section. Sin is horrible and pervasive, but grace abounds and exceeds its deadly influence! This was a way to encourage the first century fledgling church. They were overcomers in Christ (cf. 5:9-11; 8:31-39; I John 5:4). This is not a license to sin more! See Special Topic: Paul’s Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1:30.

See the Special Topic on a related word (abound) used in v. 15 at Rom. 15:13.

5:21 Both “sin” and “grace” are personified as kings. Sin reigned by the power of universal death (vv. 14, 17). Grace reigns through the power of imputed righteousness through the finished work of Jesus Christ and believers’ personal faith and repentant response to the gospel.

As God’s new people, as Christ’s body, Christians also reign with Christ (cf. 5:17; II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 22:5). This can be seen as an earthly or millennial reign (cf. Rev. 5:9-10; 20). The Bible also speaks of the same truth by asserting that the Kingdom has been given to the saints (cf. Matt. 5:3,10; Luke 12:32; Eph. 2:5-6). See Special Topic: Reigning in the Kingdom of God at 5:17,18.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Define God’s “righteousness.”
2. What is the theological distinction between “positional sanctification” and “progressive possession”?
3. Are we saved by grace or faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-9)?
4. Why do Christians suffer?
5. Are we saved or being saved or will be saved?
6. Are we sinners because we sin, or do we sin because we are sinners?
7. How are the terms “justified,” “saved” and “reconciled” related in this chapter?
8. Why does God hold me responsible for another man’s sin who lived thousands of years ago (vv. 12-21)?
9. Why did everyone die between Adam and Moses if sin was not counted during this period (vv. 13-14)?
10. Are the terms “all” and “many” synonymous (vv. 18-19, Is. 53:6, 11-12)?

ROMANS 6

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Dead to Sin But Alive in Christ	Dead to Sin, Alive to God	Dying and Rising With Christ	Dead to Sin But Alive in Christ	Baptism
6:1-11	6:1-14	6:1-4 6:5-11	6:1-4 6:5-11	6:1-7 6:8-11 Holiness, Not Sin to be Master
6:12-14		6:12-14	6:12-14	6:12-14
Slaves of Righteousness	From Slaves of Sin to Slaves of God	The Two Slaverys	Slaves of Righteousness	The Christian is Freed From the Slavery of Sin
6:15-23	6:15-23	6:15-19 6:20-23	6:15-19 6:20-23	6:15-19 The Reward of Sin and the Reward of Uprightness 6:20-23

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 6:1-8:39 form a unit of thought (literary unit) that deals with the Christian's relationship to sin (i.e., sanctification). This is a very important issue because the gospel is based on the free unmerited grace of God through Christ (3:21-5:21) so, therefore, how does sin affect the believer? Chapter 6 is based on two supposed questions, vv. 1 and 15. Verse 1 relates to 5:20, while v. 15 relates to 6:14. The first is related to sin as a lifestyle (PRESENT TENSE), the second to individual

acts of sin (AORIST TENSE). It is obvious also that vv. 1-14 deal with believers' freedom from sin's domination, while vv. 15-23 deal with believers freedom to serve God as they previously served sin—totally, completely, and whole-heartedly.

- B. Sanctification is both (see special Topic at 6:4)
 - 1. a position (imputed like justification at salvation, 3:21-5:21)
 - 2. a progressing Christlikeness
 - a. 6:1-8:39 express this truth theologically
 - b. 12:1-15:13 express it practically (See Special Topic at 6:4)
- C. Often commentators must theologically split the subject of justification and positional sanctification to help grasp their biblical meanings. In reality they are simultaneous acts of grace (positional, I Cor. 1:30; 6:11). The mechanism for both is the same—God's grace demonstrated in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection/ascension which is received by faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-9).
- D. This chapter teaches the potential full maturity (sinlessness, cf. I John 3:6,9; 5:18) of God's children in Christ. Chapter 7 and I John 1:8-2:1 show the reality of believers' continuing sinfulness.

Much of the conflict over Paul's view of forgiveness (i.e., justification by grace through faith) was related to the issue of morality. The Jews wanted to assure godly living by demanding that new converts conform to the Mosaic law. It must be admitted that some did and do use Paul's views as a license to sin (cf. vv. 1,15; II Pet. 3:15-16). Paul believed that the indwelling Spirit, not an external code, would produce godly Christlike followers. In reality this is the difference between the Old Covenant (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28) and the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27).
- E. Baptism is simply a physical illustration of the spiritual reality of justification/sanctification. In Romans the twin doctrines of positional sanctification (justification) and experiential sanctification (Christlikeness) are both stressed. Being buried with Him (v. 4) is parallel with "be crucified with Him" (v. 6).
- F. The keys to overcoming temptation and sin in the Christian's life are
 - 1. Know who you are in Christ. Know what He has done for you. You are free from sin! You are dead to sin!
 - 2. Reckon/count your position in Christ into your daily life situations.
 - 3. We are not our own! We must serve/obey our Master. We serve/obey out of gratitude and love to the One who first loved us and gave Himself for us!
 - 4. The Christian life is a supernatural life. It, like salvation, is a gift from God in Christ. He initiates it and provides its power. We must respond in repentance and faith, both initially and daily.
 - 5. Don't play around with sin. Label it for what it is. Turn from it; flee from it. Don't put yourself into the place of temptation.
 - 6. Sin in the believer is an addiction that can be broken, but it takes knowledge of the gospel, the presence of the Spirit, time, effort, and volition.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-7

¹What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ²May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ³Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have become united with *Him* in the

likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷for he who has died is freed from sin.

6:1

NASB “Are we to continue to sin that grace might increase”

NKJV “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound”

NRSV “Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound”

TEV “That we should continue to live in sin so that God’s grace will increase”

NJ “Does it follow that we should remain in sin so as to let grace have greater scope”

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. It literally asks the question, are Christians “to abide with” or “to embrace” sin? This question looks back to 5:20. Paul used a hypothetical objector (diatribe) to deal with the potential misuse of grace (cf. I John 3:6,9; 5:18). God’s grace and mercy are not meant to give a license for rebellious living.

Paul’s gospel of a free salvation as the gift of God’s grace through Christ (cf. 3:24; 5:15, 17; 6:23) raised many questions about life style righteousness. How does a free gift produce moral uprightness? Justification and sanctification must not be separated (cf. Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 8:21; 11:28; John 13:17; Rom. 2:13; James 1:22-25; 2:14-26).

On this point let me quote F. F. Bruce in *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*,

“the baptism of Christians constituted the frontier between their old unregenerate existence and their new life in Christ: it marked their death to the old order, so that for a baptized Christian to go on in sin was as preposterous as it would be for an emancipated slave to remain in bondage to his former owner (cf. Rom. 6:1-4, 15-23) or for a widow to remain subject to ‘the law of her husband’” (pp. 281-82, cf. Rom. 7:1-6).

In James S. Stewart’s book, *A Man in Christ*, he writes:

“The *locus classicus* for all this side of the apostles’ thought is to be found in Rom. 6. There Paul, with magnificent vigor and effort, drives home to heart and conscience the lesson that to be united with Jesus in His death means for the believer a complete and drastic break with sin” (pp. 187-88).

6:2 “may it never be” This is a rare OPTATIVE form which was a grammatical MOOD or MODE used of a wish or prayer. It was Paul’s stylistic way (i.e., Hebraic idiom) of answering a hypothetical objector. It expressed Paul’s shock and horror at unbelieving mankind’s misunderstanding and abuse of grace (cf. 3:4,6).

▣ **“we who died to sin”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE, meaning “we have died.” The SINGULAR “sin” is used so often throughout this chapter. It seems to refer to our “sin nature” inherited from Adam (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:21-22). Paul often uses the concept of death as a metaphor to show the believer’s new relationship to Jesus. They are no longer subject to sin’s mastery.

▣ **“still live in it”** This is literally “walk.” This metaphor was used to stress either our lifestyle faith (cf. Eph. 4:1; 5:2,15) or lifestyle sin (cf. v. 4; Eph. 4:17). Believers cannot be happy in sin!

6:3-4 “have been baptized. . . have been buried” These are both AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVES. This grammatical form often emphasized a completed act accomplished by an outside agent, here the Spirit. They are parallel in this context.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BAPTISM

Curtis Vaughan, *Acts*, has an interesting footnote on p. 28.

“The Greek word for ‘baptized’ is a third person imperative; the word for ‘repent,’ a second person imperative. This change from the more direct second person command to the less direct third person of ‘baptized’ implies that Peter’s basic primary demand is for repentance.”

This follows the preaching emphasis of John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 3:2) and Jesus (cf. Matt. 4:17). Repentance seems to be a spiritual key and baptism is an outward expression of this spiritual change. The New Testament knew nothing of unbaptized believers! To the early church baptism was the public profession of faith. It is the occasion for the public confession of faith in Christ, not the mechanism for salvation! It needs to be remembered that baptism is not mentioned in Peter’s second sermon, though repentance is (cf. 3:19; Luke 24:17). Baptism was an example set by Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:13-18). Baptism was commanded by Jesus (cf. Matt. 28:19). The modern question of the necessity of baptism for salvation is not addressed in the New Testament; all believers are expected to be baptized. However, one must also guard against a sacramental mechanicalism! Salvation is a faith issue, not a right-place, right-words, right-ritual act issue!

▣ **“into Christ Jesus”** The use of *eis* (into) parallels the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19, where new believers are baptized *eis* (into) the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The PREPOSITION is also used to describe the believers being baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ in I Cor. 12:13. *Eis* in this context is synonymous with *en* (in Christ) in v. 11, which is Paul’s favorite way to denote believers. It is a LOCATIVE OF SPHERE. Believers live and move and have their being in Christ. These PREPOSITIONS express this intimate union, this sphere of fellowship, this vine and branch relationship. Believers identify with and join with Christ in His death (cf. v. 6; 8:17), in His resurrection (cf. v. 5), in His obedient service to God, and in His Kingdom!

▣ **“into His death. . .we have been buried with Him”** Baptism by immersion illustrates death and burial (cf. v. 5 and Col. 2:12). Jesus used baptism as a metaphor for His own death (cf. Mark 10:38-39; Luke 12:50). The emphasis here is not a doctrine of baptism, but of the Christian’s new, intimate relationship to Christ’s death and burial. Believers identify with Christ’s baptism, with His character, with His sacrifice, with His mission. Sin has no power over believers!

6:4 “we have been buried with Him through baptism into death” In this chapter, as is characteristic of all of Paul’s writing, he uses many *sun* (with) compounds (e.g., three in Eph. 2:5-6).

1. *sun* + *thaptō* = co-buried, v. 4; Col. 2:12; also note v. 8
2. *sun* + *phuō* = co-planted, v. 5
3. *sun* + *stauroō* = co-crucified, v. 6; Gal. 2:20
4. *sun* + *zaō* = co-exist, v. 8; II Tim. 2:11 (also has co-died and co-reign)

▣ **“so we too might walk in newness of life”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. The expected result of salvation is sanctification. Because believers have received God’s grace through Christ and have been indwelt by the Spirit, their lives must be different. Our new life (*zoē*) does not bring us salvation, but it is the result of salvation (cf. vv. 16, 19; 8:4; 13:13; 14:15; and Eph. 1:4; 2:8-9,10; James 2:14-26). This is not an either/or question, faith or works, but there is a sequential order.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION

The NT asserts that when sinners turn to Jesus in repentance and faith, they are instantaneously justified and sanctified. This is their new position in Christ. His righteousness has been imputed to them (cf. Romans 4). They are declared right and holy (a forensic act of God).

But the NT also urges believers on to holiness or sanctification. It is both a theological position in the finished work of Jesus Christ and a call to be Christlike in attitude and actions in daily life. As salvation is a free gift and a cost-everything lifestyle, so too, is sanctification.

Initial Response

Acts 20:23; 26:18
Romans 15:16
I Corinthians 1:2-3; 6:11
II Thessalonians 2:13
Hebrews 2:11; 10:10,14; 13:12
I Peter 1:12

A Progressive Christlikeness

Romans 6:19
II Corinthians 7:1
Ephesians 1:4; 2:10
I Thessalonians 3:13; 4:3-4,7; 5:23
I Timothy 2:15
II Timothy 2:21
Hebrews 12:14
I Peter 1:15-16

▣ **“newness of life”** This is “new” in quantity, not just new in time. It is used in a variety of ways in the NT to speak of the radical change the Messiah brings. It is the new age, cf. Isaiah 40-66.

1. new covenant, Luke 22:20; I Cor. 11:25; II Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8,13; 9:15
2. new commandment, John 13:34; I John 2:7,8; II John v. 5
3. new creation, II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15
4. newness of life, Rom. 6:4
5. newness of spirit, Rom. 7:6
6. new man, Eph. 2:15; 4:24
7. new heavens and earth, II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1 (cf. Isa. 66:22)
8. new name, Rev. 2:17; 3:12 (cf. Isa. 62:2)
9. new Jerusalem, Rev. 3:12; 21:2
10. new song, Rev. 5:9; 14:3 (cf. Isa. 42:10)

▣ **“Christ was raised”** In this context the Father’s acceptance and approval of the Son’s words and works are expressed in two great events.

1. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead
2. Jesus’ ascension to the Father’s right hand

All three persons of the Trinity were involved in raising Jesus from the realm of the dead. See full note at v. 9 and 8:11.

▣ **“the glory of the Father”** For “glory” see Special Topic at 3:23. For “Father” see Special Topic at 1:7.

6:5 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed to be true from the writer’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Paul assumed his readers were believers.

▣ **“we have become united with *Him*”** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which could be translated, “have been and continue to be joined together” or “have been or continue to be planted together with.” This truth is theologically analogous to “abiding” in John 15. If believers have been identified with Jesus’ death

(cf. Gal. 2:19-20; Col. 2:20; 3:3-5), theologically they should be identified with His resurrection life (cf. v. 10).

This metaphorical aspect of baptism as death was meant to show

1. we have died to the old life, the old covenant
2. we are alive to the Spirit, the new covenant

Christian baptism is, therefore, not the same as the baptism of John the Baptist, who was the last OT prophet. Baptism was the early church's opportunity for the new believer's public profession of faith. The earliest baptismal formula, to be repeated by the candidate, was "I believe Jesus is Lord" (cf. Rom. 10:9-13). This public declaration was a formal, ritual act of what had happened previously in experience. Baptism was not the mechanism of forgiveness, salvation, or the coming of the Spirit, but the occasion for their public profession and confession (cf. Acts 2:38). However, it also was not optional. Jesus commanded it (cf. Matt. 28:19-20), and exemplified it, (cf. Matt. 3; Mark 1; Luke 3) and it became part of the Apostolic sermons and procedures of Acts.

6:6

NASB	"knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him"
NKJV	"knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him"
NRSV	"We know that our old self was crucified with him"
TEV	"And we know this: our old being has been put to death with Christ on his cross"
NJB	"We must realize that our former selves have been crucified with him"

This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE meaning "our old self has been once for all crucified by the Spirit." The PASSIVE VOICE denotes divine agency. This truth is crucial to victorious Christian living. Believers must realize their new relationship to sin (cf. Gal. 2:20; 6:14). Mankind's old fallen self (Adamic nature) has died with Christ (cf. v. 7; Eph. 4:22 and Col. 3:9). As believers we now have a choice about sin as Adam originally did.

▣

NASB, NKJV	"that our body of sin might be done away with"
NRSV	"so that the body of sin might be destroyed"
TEV	"in order that the power of the sinful self might be destroyed"
NJB	"to destroy the sinful body"

Paul uses the word "body" (*soma*) with several GENITIVE phrases.

1. body of (the) sin, Rom. 6:6
2. body of this death, Rom. 7:24
3. body of the flesh, Col. 2:11

Paul is speaking of the physical life of this age of sin and rebellion. Jesus' new resurrection body is the body of the new age of righteousness (cf. II Cor. 5:17). Physicalness is not the problem (Greek philosophy), but sin and rebellion. The body is not evil. Christianity affirms the belief in a physical body in eternity (cf. I Corinthians 15). However, the physical body is the battle ground of temptation, sin, and self.

This is an AORIST PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. The phrase "done away with" meant "made inoperative," "made powerless," or "made unproductive," not "destroyed." This was a favorite word with Paul, used over twenty-five times. See Special Topic: Null and Void (*katargeō*) at 3:3. Our physical body is morally neutral, but it is also the battleground for the continuing spiritual conflict (cf. vv. 12-13; 5:12-21; 12:1-2).

6:7 "he who has died is freed from sin" This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE and a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, meaning "he who has died has been and continues to be free from sin." Because believers are new creations in Christ they have been and continue to be set free from the slavery of sin and self inherited from Adam's fall (cf. 7:1-6).

The Greek term translated here as “freed” is the term translated elsewhere in the opening chapters as “justified” (ASV). In this context “freed” (NKJV, NRSV) makes much more sense (similar to its use in Acts 13:39). Remember, context determines word meaning, not a dictionary or preset technical definition. Words only have meaning in sentences and sentences only have meaning in paragraphs.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:8-11

⁸Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. ¹⁰For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

6:8 “IF” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the writer’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Believer’s baptism visually exemplifies one’s death with Christ.

▣ **“we shall also live with Him”** This context demands a “here and now” orientation (cf. I John 1:7), not an exclusively future setting. Verse 5 speaks of our sharing Christ’s death, while verse 8 speaks of our sharing His life. This is the same tension inherent in the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God. It is both here and now, yet future. Free grace must produce self-control, not license.

6:9 “having been raised from the dead” This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE (see 6:4, AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE).

The NT affirms that all three persons of the Trinity were active in Jesus’ resurrection.

1. the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:11)
2. the Son (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)
3. and most frequently, the Father (cf. Acts 2:24,32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9)

The Father’s actions were confirmation of His acceptance of Jesus’ life, death, and teachings. This was a major aspect of the early preaching of the Apostles. See Special Topic: The *Kerygma* at 1:2.

▣

NASB “death no longer is master over Him”
NKJV, NRSV “Death no longer has dominion over Him”
TEV “death will no longer rule over him”
NJB “Death has no power over him anymore”

The VERB *kurieuō* is from the term *kurios* (i.e., Lord), which means “owner,” “master,” “husband,” or “lord.” Jesus is now lord over death (cf. Rev. 1:18). Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection. There have been some people

1. taken to heaven alive (i.e., translated, Enoch and Elijah)
2. brought back to physical life (i.e., resuscitated)

Jesus is the only one who has been resurrected with a new age body. Jesus is the first to break the power of death (cf. I Corinthians 15)!

6:10 “for the death that He died, He died to sin” Jesus lived in a sinful world and although He never sinned, the sinful world crucified Him (cf. Heb. 10:10). Jesus’ substitutionary death on mankind’s behalf canceled the Law’s requirements and consequences over them (cf. Gal. 3:13; Col 2:13-14).

▣ **“once for all”** In this context Paul is emphasizing the crucifixion of Jesus. His one-time death for sin has affected His followers’ death to sin.

The book of Hebrews also emphasizes the ultimacy of Jesus’ once-given sacrificial death. This once-done salvation and forgiveness are forever accomplished (cf. “once” [*ephapax*], 7:27; 9:12; 10:10 and “once for all” [*hapax*], 6:4; 9:7,26,27,28; 10:2; 12:26,27). This is the recurrent, accomplished, sacrificial affirmation.

▣ **“but the life that He lives, He lives to God”** The two AORISTS of v. 10a are contrasted with two PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVES in v. 10b. Believers died with Christ; believers live for God, through Christ (cf. Gal. 2:19-20). The goal of the gospel is not forgiveness only (justification) but service to God (sanctification). Believers are saved to serve!

6:11 “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. This is an ongoing, habitual command for believers. Christians’ knowledge of Christ’s work on their behalf is crucial for daily life. The term “consider” (cf. 4:4,9), was an accounting term that meant “carefully add it up” and then act on that knowledge. Verses 1-11 acknowledged one’s position in Christ (positional sanctification), while 12-13 emphasized walking in Him (progressive sanctification). See Special Topic at v. 4.

▣

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB “Christ Jesus”

NKJV “Christ Jesus our Lord”

the shorter reading occurs in MSS P⁴⁶, A, B, D, F, G. The UBS⁴ gives it an “A” rating (certain). The expanded phrase is early (MSS P⁹⁴, \aleph , C), but was probably added by a scribe from v. 23. Like the vast majority of textual variants, it makes little difference to the meaning of the text.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:12-14

¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

6:12 “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually meant to stop an act already in process. The term “reign” relates to 5:17-21 and 6:23. Paul personifies several theological concepts.

1. death reigned as king (cf. 5:14,17; 6:23)
2. grace reigned as king (cf. 5:21)
3. sin reigned as king (cf. 6:12,14)

The real question is who is reigning in your life? The believer has the power in Christ to choose! The tragedy for the individual, the local church, and the Kingdom of God is when believers choose self and sin, even while claiming grace!

See Special Topic: Reigning in the Kingdom of God at 5:17m18.

6:13 “do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually meant to stop an act already in process. This shows the potential

for continuing sin in the lives of believers (cf. 7:1ff; I John 1:8-2:1). But the necessity of sin has been eliminated in the believer's new relationship with Christ, vv. 1-11.

▣ **“as instruments”** This term (*hoplon*) referred to “a soldier’s weapons” (cf. 13:12; John 18:3; II Cor. 6:7; 10:4). Our physical body is the battleground for temptation (cf. vv. 12-13; 12:1-2; I Cor. 6:20; Phil. 1:20). Our lives publicly display the gospel.

▣ **“but present yourselves to God”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE which was a call for a decisive act (cf. 12:1). Believers do this at salvation by faith, but they must continue to do this throughout their lives.

Notice the parallelism of this verse.

1. same VERB and both IMPERATIVES
2. battle metaphors
 - a. weapons of unrighteousness
 - b. weapons of righteousness
3. believers can present their bodies to sin or themselves to God

Remember, this verse is referring to believers—the choice continues; the battle continues (cf. 6:12,19; I Cor. 6:18-19; Eph. 6:10-18)!

6:14 “For sin shall not be master over you” This is a FUTURE ACTIVE INDICATIVE (cf. Ps. 19:13) functioning as an IMPERATIVE, “sin must not be master over you!” Sin is not master over believers because it is not master over Christ, (cf. v. 9; John 16:33).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:15-19

¹⁵What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! ¹⁶Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

6:15 This second supposed question (diatribe) is similar to 6:1. Both answer different questions about the Christian's relation to sin. Verse 1 deals with grace not being used as a license to sin, while v. 15 deals with the Christian's need to fight, or resist, individual acts of sin. Also, at the same time the believer must serve God now with the same enthusiasm with which he previously served sin (cf. 6:14).



NASB, NKJV,

TEV “Shall we sin”

NRSV “Should we sin”

NJB “that we are free to sin”

The Williams and Phillips translations both translate this AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE as a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE similar to v. 1. This is not the proper focus. Notice the alternate translations

1. KJV, ASV, NIV – “shall we sin?”
2. The Centenary Translation – “Shall we commit an act of sin?”
3. RSV – “are we to sin?”

This question is emphatic in Greek and expected a “yes” answer. This was Paul’s diatribe method of communicating truth. This verse expresses false theology! Paul answered this by his characteristic “May it never be.” Paul’s gospel of the radical free grace of God was misunderstood and abused by many false teachers.

6:16 The question expects a “yes” response. Humans serve something or someone. Who reigns in your life, sin or God? Who humans obey shows who they serve (cf. Gal. 6:7-8).

6:17 “But thanks be to God” Paul often breaks out into praise to God. His writings flow from his prayers and his prayers from his knowledge of the gospel. See Special Topic: Paul’s Prayer, Praise, and Thanksgiving to God at 7:25.

▣ **“you were. . .you became”** This is the IMPERFECT TENSE of the VERB, “to be,” which described their state of being in the past (slaves of sin) followed by an AORIST TENSE which asserts that their state of rebellion has ceased.

▣ **“You became obedient from your heart to that form of teaching”** In context, this refers to their justification by grace through faith, which must lead to daily Christlikeness.
The term “teaching” referred to Apostolic teaching or the gospel.

▣ **“heart”** See Special Topic: Heart at 1:24.

▣

NASB	“that form of teaching to which you were committed”
NKJV	“that form of doctrine to which you were delivered”
NRSV, NIV	“to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted”
TEV	“the truth found in the teaching you received”
NJB	“to the pattern of teaching to which you were introduced”

This thought is parallel to I Cor. 15:1 and refers to the gospel truths that these believers heard and received. The gospel is

1. a person to welcome
2. truths about that person to believe
3. a life like that person’s to live!

▣ **“form”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FORM (*TUPOS*)

The problem is the word *tupos*, which has a variety of uses.

1. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, p. 645
 - a. pattern
 - b. plan
 - c. form or manner of writing
 - d. decree or rescript
 - e. sentence or decision
 - f. model of human body as votive offerings to the healing god
 - g. VERB used in the sense of enforcing the precepts of the law

2. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, p. 249
 - a. scar (cf. John 20:25)
 - b. image (cf. Acts 7:43)
 - c. model (cf. Heb. 8:5)
 - d. example (cf. I Cor. 10:6; Phil. 3:17)
 - e. archetype (cf. Rom. 5:14)
 - f. kind (cf. Acts 23:25)
 - g. contents (cf. Acts 23:25)
3. Harold K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 411
 - a. a blow, an impression, a mark (cf. John 20:25)
 - b. a delineation
 - c. an image (cf. Acts 7:43)
 - d. a formula, scheme (cf. Rom. 6:17)
 - e. form, purport (cf. Acts 23:25)
 - f. a figure, counterpart (cf. I Cor. 10:6)
 - g. an anticipative figure, type (cf. Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 10:11)
 - h. a model pattern (cf. Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5)
 - i. a moral pattern (cf. Phil. 3:17; I Thess. 1:7; II Thess. 3:9; I Tim. 4:12; I Pet. 5:3)

In this context # i above seems best. The gospel has both doctrine and lifestyle implications. The free gift of salvation in Christ also demands a life like Christ!

6:18 “having been freed from sin” This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. The gospel has freed believers by the agency of the Spirit through the work of Christ. Believers have been freed both from the penalty of sin (justification) and the tyranny of sin (sanctification, cf. vv. 7 and 22). One day they will be free from the presence of sin (glorification, cf. 8:29-30).

▣ **“you became the slaves of righteousness”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE, “you became enslaved to righteousness.” See Special Topic at 1:17. Believers are freed from sin to serve God (cf. vv. 14,19,22; 7:4; 8:2)! The goal of free grace is a godly life. Justification is both a legal pronouncement and an impetus for personal righteousness. God wants to save us and change us so as to reach others! Grace does not stop with individual believer’s salvation (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

6:19 “I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh” Paul is addressing the believers at Rome. Is he addressing a local problem he had heard about (jealousy among Jewish believers and Gentile believers) or is he asserting a truth about all believers? Paul used this phrase earlier in Rom. 3:5, as he does in Gal. 3:15.

Verse 19 is parallel to v. 16. Paul repeats his theological points for emphasis.

Some would say this phrase means that Paul was apologizing for using a slave metaphor. However, “because of the weakness of your flesh” does not fit this interpretation. Slavery was not viewed as an evil by first century society, especially in Rome. It was simply the culture of its day. Two thirds of the Roman world were slaves.

▣ **“flesh”** See Special Topic at 1:3.

▣ **“resulting in sanctification”** This is the goal of justification (cf. v. 22). The NT used this term in two theological senses related to salvation.

1. positional sanctification, which is the gift of God (objective aspect) given at salvation along with justification through faith in Christ (cf. Acts 26:18; I Cor. 1:2; 6:11; Eph. 5:26-27; I Thess. 5:23; II Thess. 2:13; Heb. 10:10; 13:12; I Pet. 1:2)
2. progressive sanctification which is also the work of God through the Holy Spirit whereby the believer’s life is transformed into the image and maturity of Christ (subjective aspect, cf. II Cor. 7:1; I Thess. 4:3,7; I Tim. 2:15; II Tim. 2:21; Heb. 12:10,14)

See Special Topic: Sanctification at 6:4.

Sanctification is both a gift and a command! It is a position (standing) and an activity (lifestyle)! It is an INDICATIVE (a statement) and an IMPERATIVE (a command)! It comes at the beginning but does not mature until the end (cf. Phil. 1:6; 2:12-13).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:20-23

²⁰For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. ²²But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

6:20-21 This is simply stating the opposite of vv. 18 and 19. Believers can only serve one master (cf. Luke 16:13).

6:22-23 These verses form a logical progression of the wages paid by whom one serves. Thank God this discussion of sin and the believer ends on a grace focus! First is the gift of salvation through our cooperation, and then the gift of the Christian life, also through our cooperation. Both are received gifts through faith and repentance.

6:22 “you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life” The term “benefit,” literally “fruit” is used in v. 21 to speak of the consequences of sin, but in v. 22 it speaks of the consequences of serving God. The immediate benefit is the believer’s Christlikeness. The ultimate benefit is being with Him and like Him eternally (cf. I John 3:2). If there is no immediate result (changed life, cf. James 2) the ultimate result can be legitimately questioned (eternal life, cf. Matt. 7). “No fruit, no root!”

6:23 This is the summary of the entire chapter. Paul painted the choice in black and white. The choice is ours—sin and death or free grace through Christ and eternal life. It is very similar to the “two ways” of OT wisdom literature (Deut. 30:1,17; Psalm 1; Proverbs 4; 10-19; Matt. 7:13-14).

▣ **“the wages of sin”** Sin is personified as (1) a slave owner, (2) a military general, or (3) a king who pays wages (cf. 3:9; 5:21; 6:9,14,17).

▣ **“the free gift of God is eternal life”** This word, translated “free gift” (*charisma*) was from the root for grace (*charis*, cf. 3:24; 5:15, 16, 17; Eph. 2:8-9). See note at 3:24.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How are good works related to salvation (cf. Eph. 2:8-9,10)?
2. How is continual sin in the life of the believer related to salvation (cf. I John 3:6,9)?
3. Does the chapter teach “sinless perfection?”
4. How is chapter 6 related to chapters 5 and 7?
5. Why is baptism discussed here?
6. Do Christians retain their old nature? Why?
7. What is the implication of PRESENT TENSE verbals dominating v. 1-14 and AORIST TENSE VERBALS in 15-23?

ROMANS 7

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
An Analogy from Marriage 7:1-6	Freed From the Law 7:1-6	An Analogy from Marriage 7:1-3 7:4-6	An Illustration from Marriage 7:1-6	The Christian Is Freed from Slavery to the Law 7:1-6
The Problem of Indwelling Sin 7:7-12	Sin's Advantage in the Law 7:7-12	The Law and Sin 7:7-12	Law and Sin 7:7-11	The Function of the Law 7:7-8 7:9-11
7:13-25	Law Cannot Save from Sin 7:13-25	7:13 The Inner Conflict 7:14-20 7:21-25a 7:25b	7:12-13 The Conflict in Man 7:14-20 7:21-25a 7:25b	7:12-13 The Inward Struggle 7:14-20 7:21-23 7:24-25a 7:25b

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS ON VERSES 1-6

- A. Chapter 7 must be interpreted
1. in light of chapter 6, especially vv. 12-14 (also 3:20,21-31; 4:13-16; 5:20)
 2. it must also be related to the tension in the church of Rome between believing Gentiles and believing Jews, which is seen in chapters 9-11
- The exact nature of the problem is uncertain; it may have been
- a. legalism based on The Mosaic Law,
 - b. Judaizers' emphasis on Moses first, then Christ,
 - c. misunderstanding of how the gospel applies to Jews,
 - d. misunderstanding of the relationship between the Old and New Covenants.
 - e. jealousy of believing Jewish leadership in the church having been replaced by believing Gentile leadership during the emperor's edict, which stopped all Jewish rituals in Rome. Many believing Jews may have left also
- B. Romans 7:1-6 continues the figurative language of chapter 6 about the Christian's relationship to his old life. The metaphors used are
1. death and release from slavery to another master (chapter 6)
 2. death and release from marriage obligations (chapter 7)
- C. Chapters 6 and 7 are in literary parallel; chapter 6 deals with the believer's relationship to "sin" and chapter 7 with the believer's relationship to "law." The analogy of death freeing a slave (6:12-23) is paralleled by death freeing the marriage bond (7:1-6).

Chapter 6	Chapter 7
6:1 "sin"	7:1 "law"
6:2 "died to sin"	7:4 "died to law"
6:4 "that we might walk in newness of life"	7:6 "that we might serve in newness of spirit"
6:7 "he who has died is freed from sin"	7:6 "we have been freed from the law having died to that wherein we were held"
6:18 "having been set free from sin"	7:3 "free from the law"

(taken from Anders Nygren's *Commentary on Romans*, translated by Carl C. Rassmussen, p. 268)

- D. The Law with its decrees was a death sentence. All humans stand condemned under the Law (cf. Rom. 6:14; 7:4; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14). The Mosaic Law became a curse!
- E. There have been four major theories about how to interpret chapter 7
1. Paul is speaking of himself (autobiographical)
 2. Paul is speaking as a representative of all mankind (representative, Chrysostom)
 3. Paul is speaking of Adam's experience (Theodore of Mopsuetia)
 4. Paul is speaking of Israel's experience
- F. In many ways Romans 7 functions like Genesis 3. It shows the downward pull of rebellion even to those who are acquainted with God. Knowledge cannot free fallen humanity; only God's grace, only a new heart, a new mind, and a new spirit can do that (the New Covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34;

Ezek. 36:26-27). And even then, there is an ongoing struggle (cf. 6:12,19; I Cor. 6:10-19; Eph. 6:10-18)!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-3

¹Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? ²For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. ³So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.

7:1 “(for I am speaking to those who know the law)” This could refer to

1. believing Jews only
2. the conflict between believing Jews and Gentiles in the Roman church
3. law in a general sense as relative to all mankind (cf. 2:14-15)
4. to new Gentile believers involved in learning about their new faith (catechism, 6:17) from the OT Scriptures

▣ **“the law”** This is the main thrust of the chapter (cf. vv. 1,2,4,5,6, etc). However, Paul used the term in several different senses (natural law; Mosaic Law; societal norms). It seems that Paul’s discussion was triggered by 6:14. His presentation is parallel to the structure of chapter 6. See Contextual Insights, C. The Mosaic Law and its relationship to the New Covenant in Christ is also discussed in 3:21-31 and 4:13-16.



NASB “that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives”

NKJV “that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives”

NRSV “that the law is binding on a person only during that person’s lifetime”

TEV “The law rules over a man only as long as he lives”

NJB “that laws affect a person only during his lifetime”

This is literally “lord it over” (*kurieuō*, cf. 6:9,14). The Mosaic Law was both a great blessing (cf. Ps. 19; 119), and a horrible curse (cf. Gal. 3:13; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14). With physical death, obligations to the Law cease. This is the same metaphor used in chapter 6 concerning the believer’s death to sin.

7:2 “for the married woman” This is Paul’s major illustration in vv. 1-6. In chapter 6 he picked up on death ending a person’s obligation as a slave. Here, marriage and its obligations is the focus. The illustration is inverted because it is the husband who died so that the widow could remarry, whereas in Paul’s analogy, it is the believer who died and, therefore, is alive to God.

▣ **“she is released”** This is the same VERB as in 6:6; it means “made inoperative,” “to render useless,” or “to be done away with.” In 6:6, it was in the AORIST PASSIVE, here it is PERFECT PASSIVE, meaning “has been and continues to be released.” See Special Topic at 3:3.

7:3 “she shall be called an adulteress” This comment is related to the Jewish argument between the rabbinical schools of Shammai and Hillel over Deut. 24:1-4; particularly “some indecency.” The Hillel school was the liberal group that would allow divorce for any reason. The Shammai school was the

conservative group that would allow divorce only for adultery or some other sexual impropriety (cf. Matt. 5:32; 19:9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:4-6

⁴Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. ⁵For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were *aroused* by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. ⁶But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

7:4 “you also were made to die” This is the main thrust of this paragraph (and chapter 6). It related to the analogy in chapter 6 of Christians dying to sin because they are “co-buried” (6:4) and “co-crucified” (6:6) with Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20). Believers are new creatures in Christ (see full note at 6:4), in this new age of the Spirit (cf. II Cor. 5:17). Baptism marked the boundary between the old age, old man, and the new age, new man.

▣ **“through the body of Christ”** This is not referring to the theological concept of the church as the body of Christ (cf. I Cor. 12:12,27), but to Christ’s physical body as in 6:3-11 where, when Christ died, believers, by way of identification through baptism, died with Him. His death was their death (cf. II Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20). His resurrected life freed them to serve God and others.

▣ **“that we might bear fruit for God”** This was also parallel to chapter 6, especially 6:22. Believers are now free through Christ to bind themselves to Christ. This is the continuing marriage analogy. As Christ died for believers, they now must die to sin (II Cor. 5:13-14; Gal. 2:20). As Christ was raised, they, too, are raised to new spiritual life of service to God (cf. Rom. 6:22; Eph. 2:5-6) and each other (cf. I John 3:16).

7:5

NASB “For while we were in the flesh”

NKJV “For when we were in the flesh”

NRSV “While we were living in the flesh”

TEV “For when we lived according to our human nature”

NJB “Before our conversion”

This verse is a contrast to v. 4. Verse 4 relates to the experience of a believer, as does v. 6. Verse 5 described the “fruit” of the life without God’s power (Gal. 5:18-24.) The Law shows believers their sin (vv. 7-9; Gal. 3:23-25), but cannot give them the power to overcome it.

In context this phrase is referring to believers’ fallen, sinful nature inherited from Adam (cf. 6:19). Paul uses this term *sarx* in two different ways (1) sin nature (the old man) and (2) physical body (cf. 1:3; 4:1; 9:3,5). Here it is negative, but notice Rom. 1:3; 4:1; 9:3,5; Gal. 2:20. The flesh/body (*sarx/soma*) is not evil in and of itself, but it, like the mind (*nous*), is the battleground, the place of confrontation between evil forces of this age and the Holy Spirit. Paul uses this term in a way consistent with the Septuagint, not Greek literature. See Special Topic: Flesh (*sarx*) at 1:3.

▣ **“which were *aroused* by the Law”** This aspect of rebellious human nature, which reacts aggressively to any restrictions, is clearly seen in Genesis 3 and in all humans. The Law set boundaries (cf. vv. 7-8). These boundaries were for mankind’s protection, but humans viewed them as chains and limits. The sinful,

independent spirit was stimulated by God's Law. The problem was not the limits (law, cf. vv. 12-13), but human autonomy and self will.

▣ **“to bear fruit for death”** What a stark contrast between

1. v. 5 – bear fruit for God
2. v. 6 – bear fruit for death

Believers have died to death, sin, and the Law and now they live to bear fruit for the Kingdom! Paul paints in black and white (or better paradoxical categories, see note at 8:2). A person is one of two groups—Adam or Jesus (cf. 5:12-21). Those in Jesus are free, unbound, and new (cf. Gal. 2:19-20)! Walk in it! Revel in it!

7:6 “But now” Newman and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans*, has an interesting comment.

“It is important to notice the parallels between verses 5 and 6, and at the same time their relation to what follows. Verse 5 describes the pre-Christian experience, and has its parallel in 7.7-25; verse 6 describes the present life of faith under the leadership of God's Spirit, and has its parallel in 8.1-11” (p. 130).

▣ **“we have been released”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE. This is a contrast with the IMPERFECT MIDDLE INDICATIVE of v. 5. Believers had been continually held by sin as revealed in the Law, but now they have been freed by the Spirit through the good news of the gospel. This same word is used of the woman whose husband dies in v. 2.

▣ **“having died to that by which we were bound”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE followed by an IMPERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. God set believers free through Christ's death from

1. the curse of the OT
2. their inner sinful selves

They had been continually bound by their rebellion against God's revealed will, fallen nature, personal sin, and supernatural temptation (cf. Eph. 2:2-3)!

▣ **“newness. . .oldness”** This new spiritual way seems to refer to the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-32). The Greek term “new” (*kainos* - *kainotēs*) is used by Paul of

1. the newness of life, Rom 6:4 (see full note at 6:4)
2. the newness of the Spirit, Rom. 7:6
3. the new covenant, I Cor. 11:2; II Cor. 3:6
4. the new creation, II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15
5. the new man, Eph. 2:15; 4:24

The term “old” applies to the Mosaic Law and meant “totally worn out.” Paul is contrasting the Old covenant and the New covenant, as does the author of Hebrews (cf. 8:7 and 13).

▣

NASB, NKJV “so that we serve in newness of the Spirit”

NRSV “so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit”

TEV “but in the new way of the Spirit”

NJB “free to serve in the new spiritual way”

This is literally “in newness of spirit.” It is uncertain whether this referred to the regenerated human spirit or the Holy Spirit. Most English translations capitalize it, which implies the Holy Spirit, who is

ambiguously mentioned for the first time in Romans 8 (15 times). The term “spirit” could refer to the human spirit regenerated and energized by the gospel and the Spirit in Rom. 1:4,9; 2:29; 7:6; 8:15; 11:8; 12:11; I Cor. 2:11; 4:21; 5:3,4,5; 7:34; 14:15,16,32; 16:18.

In Paul’s writings “flesh” and “spirit” are often contrasted as two distinct ways of thinking and living (cf. 7:14; 8:4; Gal. 3:3; 5:16,17,25; 6:8). Physical life without God is “flesh” (see Special Topic at 1:3), but life with God is “spirit” or “Spirit.” The indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. 8:9,11) transforms the believer into a new creature in Christ (positionally and experientially).

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS ON ROMANS 7:7-25

- A. Romans 7:7-25 expresses a human reality. All human beings, both saved and lost, have experienced the tension of good and evil in their world and in their own hearts and minds. The hermeneutical question is, “How did Paul mean this passage to be understood?” It must be related contextually to chapters 1:18-6:23 and 8:1-39. Some see it as focusing on all human beings and, therefore, see Paul’s personal experience as a paradigm. This interpretation is called “the autobiographical theory.”

Paul used “I” in a non-personal sense in I Cor. 13:1-3. This use of a non-personal “I” can also be documented from the Jewish rabbis. If this is true here, this passage would refer to mankind’s transition from innocence through conviction to salvation (chapter 8) “the representative theory” (i.e., *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 312).

However, others have seen these verses as relating to the terrible continuing struggle of a believer with the fallen human nature (i.e., Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Karl Barth). The heart-rending cry of v. 24 expresses this inner tension. The AORIST and IMPERFECT VERB TENSES dominate vv. 7-13, while the PRESENT and PERFECT VERB TENSES dominate vv. 14-25. This seems to lend credence to “the autobiographical theory” that Paul is describing his own experience from innocence, to conviction, to justification and the tension-filled road of progressive sanctification (cf. *autos egō*, “I myself,” cf. v. 25).

It is just possible that both views are true. In vv. 7-13 and 25b Paul is speaking autobiographically, while in vv. 14-25a, he is speaking of his experience of inner struggle with sin, as representative of all redeemed humanity. However, it must be remembered that this entire passage also must be seen against the backdrop of Paul as a committed Jewish religionist before regeneration. Paul’s experience was uniquely his.

- B. The Law is good. It is from God. It served, and continues to serve, a divine purpose (cf. 7:7, 12, 14, 22, 25; Matt. 5:17-19). It cannot bring peace or salvation (cf. Galatians 3). James Stewart in his book *A Man in Christ*, shows Paul’s paradoxical thinking and writing:

“You would naturally expect a man who was setting himself to construct a system of thought and doctrine to fix as rigidly as possible the meanings of the terms he employed. You would expect him to aim at precision in the phraseology of his leading ideas. You would demand that a word, once used by your writer in a particular sense should bear that sense throughout. But to look for this from Paul is to be disappointed. Much of his phraseology is fluid, not rigid. . . ‘The law is holy,’ he writes, ‘I delight in the law of God after the inward man’ (cf. Rom. 7:12-13) but it is clearly another aspect of *nomos* that makes him say elsewhere, ‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law (cf. Gal. 3:13)’” (p. 26).

- C. The textual evidence dealing with the question, “Is Paul referring to a saved or unsaved person in vv. 14-25?” is as follows
1. Unsaved person
 - a. This was the interpretation of the early Greek speaking church Fathers
 - b. The following phrases support this view
 - (1) “I am of flesh,” v. 14
 - (2) “sold into bondage to sin,” v. 14
 - (3) “nothing good dwells in me,” v. 18
 - (4) “making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members,” v. 23
 - (5) “wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” v. 24
 - c. The immediate context of chapter 6 is that we are free from the mastery of sin. The context of chap. 8 starts with “so then.”
 - d. The absence of any reference to the Spirit or Christ until the close of this context (v. 25).
 2. Saved person
 - a. This was the interpretation of Augustine, Calvin, and the Reformed tradition
 - b. The following phrases support this view
 - (1) “we know that the Law is spiritual,” v. 14
 - (2) “I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good,” v. 16
 - (3) “the good that I wish, I do not do...,” v. 19
 - (4) “I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,” v. 22
 - c. The larger context of Romans places chapter 7 in the section dealing with sanctification.
 - d. The obvious change of verb tenses from IMPERFECT and AORISTS in vv. 7-13 to the consistent use of the PRESENT tense in vv. 14-24 imply a different and new section of Paul’s life (i.e., conversion).
- D. The more a believer strives toward Christlikeness, the more he experiences his/her own sinfulness. This paradox fits well this context and the personality of Paul (and, for that matter, most believers; for an opposite view see Gordon Fee, *Paul, The Spirit, and the People of God*).
- A line from a Lutheran hymn by Henry Twells:
- “And none, O Lord, has perfect rest,
For none is wholly free from sin;
And they who faint would serve Thee best
Are conscious most of wrong within.”
- I think Paul was struggling with his Pharisaic past which gave a structure to his presentation of “Law” and “sin/death.” However, I am also impacted by my own struggle with temptation and sin after salvation. It has surely colored my interpretation. I think Gordon Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, represents another valid Christian’s experience and perspective. One thing I know, the tension or conflict between
1. old age – new age
 2. old man – new man
 3. law – spirit
- has been dealt with in Christ! Victory is ours. Never focus on chapter 7 without noting chapters 6 and 8. Victory is ours in Him!
- E. *Sun* (PREPOSITION in 8:32) compounds in Romans 8
1. v. 16 – *sun* + witness/testify
 2. v. 17 – *sun* + heir

3. v. 17 – *sun* + suffer
4. v. 17 – *sun* + glorify
5. v. 22 – *sun* + groan
6. v. 22 – *sun* + birth pains
7. v. 26 – *sun* + take hold of
8. v. 28 – *sun* + work with/cooperate
9. v. 29 – *sun* + conformed

These compounds denote “joint participation with” or “cooperation with.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:7-12

⁷What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, “YOU SHALL NOT COVET.” ⁸But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. ⁹I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; ¹⁰and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; ¹¹for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹²So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

7:7 “What shall we say then” Paul is returning to his use of diatribe (cf. 6:1,15; 7:1,13).

▣ **“Is the Law sin”** One of the paradoxes of revelation is that God used the holiness and goodness of the Law as a mirror to reveal sin, so as to bring fallen mankind to the place of repentance and faith (cf. vv. 12-13; Galatians 3). Also surprisingly the Law continues to function in sanctification but not in justification (see Special Topic: Paul’s Views of Mosaic Law at 13:9).

▣ **“May it never be”** Paul’s characteristic rejection of a false assertion (cf. v. 13; 3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 9:14; 11:1,11; Gal. 2:17; 3:21).

▣ **“on the contrary”** Paul’s literary style in Romans uses strong contrasts to make his points (cf. 3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:13; 9:14; 11:1,11).

▣ **“I”** Mark in your Bible the number of times the personal pronouns “I,” “my,” or “me” appear in the context of vv. 7-25. It will amaze you. It is something over forty times.

▣ **“I would not have come to know sin except through the Law”** This is one of the key passages which reveal the concept of the Mosaic Law functioning as a mirror to reveal personal sin (cf. 3:20; 4:65; 5:20; Gal. 3:14-29, especially v. 24). To break the Law one time was to break the Covenant and, thereby, to bear its consequences (cf. v. 10 and James 2:10)!

▣ **“except through the Law”** This is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is called “contrary to fact.” Paul was convicted of sin. This is the only example of this grammatical feature in Romans. Paul does use it in Gal. 1:10; 3:21, as well as I Cor. 2:8; 5:10; 11:31; and II Cor. 12:11.

▣ **“YOU SHALL NOT COVET”** This is a quote of the last command of the Ten Commandments (cf. Exod. 20:17; Deut. 5:21). This last commandment focuses on proper attitude, which is really the essence of them all (cf. Matthew 5-7). The Law is often referred to as “the commandment” (cf. vv. 8,9,11,12,13).

The term “covet” meant “to set one’s heart on” or “to desire strongly.” God has given humans (lost and saved) many good things through creation, but humans tend to take God’s gifts beyond the God-given bounds. “More-and-more for me at any cost” becomes their motto! Self is a terrible tyrant! See Special Topic: Notes on Exodus 20:17 at 13:8-9.

7:8

NASB, NKJV “taking opportunity”

NRSV “seizing an opportunity”

TEV “found its chance”

NJB “took advantage of”

This was a military term that was used of a beach-head or base of operations (cf. vv. 8 and 11). It is personalized in this context (cf. vv. 9,11). Sin was characterized as a military operation (cf. v.11) led by a military leader (cf. vv. 11 and 17; 6:12, 14, 16).

▣ **“for apart from the Law sin is dead”** Sin is rebellion against God’s will (cf. Rom. 4:15; 5:13; I Cor. 15:56). There is no VERB in this phrase; one must be supplied. If one supplies a PRESENT TENSE, it implies that this is a universal principle. If one supplies an AORIST TENSE, it referred to Paul’s life specifically.

7:9 “I was once alive” This could refer to Paul as (1) a child during the age of innocence (i.e., before *Bar Mitzvah*) or (2) as a committed Pharisee before the truth of the gospel broke into his heart (cf. Acts 23:1; Phil. 3:6; II Tim. 1:3). The first represents “the autobiographical theory” of interpretation of chapter 7 and the second “the representative theory” of interpretation of chapter 7.

▣ **“when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died”** Mankind’s rebellious spirit is energized by prohibitions. The “do not” of God’s Law triggers the self-directing pride of fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1-6). Notice how sin continues to be personified, as in 5:21 and 7:8,11,17,20.

7:10 “the commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me” This is probably a reference to the promise of Lev. 18:5; Deut. 4:1; or possibly Rom. 2:13. The Law promised what it could not fulfill, not because it was sinful, but because humanity is weak and rebellious. The Law became a death sentence (cf. Gal. 3:13; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14).

7:11 “deceived me and through it killed me” These are both AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE VERBS. This term, “deceived,” is used of the serpent deceiving Eve in the Septuagint (LXX) of Gen. 3:13. Paul uses this VERB several times (cf. Rom. 16:18; I Cor. 3:18; II Cor. 11:3; II Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 2:14). Adam and Eve’s problem was also coveting (cf. II Cor. 11:3; I Tim. 2:14). Adam and Eve died spiritually by disobeying God’s command (now revealed in the Law, cf. I Cor. 15:56), and so did Paul and so do all humans (1:18-3:20).

7:12 This is Paul’s affirmation of the goodness of the Law. It is not the problem. However Paul’s parallel structure, using “sin” in chapter 6 and “law” in chapter 7, must have upset the legalistic Jewish believers (the weak of 14:1-15:13) in the Roman church.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:13

¹³Therefore did that which is good become a *cause of death* for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.

7:13

NASB “sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin. . .sin might become utterly sinful”

NKJV “sin, that it might appear sin. . .might become exceedingly sinful”

NRSV “that sin might be shown to be sin. . .sinful beyond measure”

TEV “in order that its true nature as sin might be revealed”

NJB “sin, to show itself in its true colors. . .was able to exercise all its sinful power”

Sin’s evil nature is clearly seen in the fact that it took something as good, wholesome, and godly as the Mosaic Law (cf. Ps. 19, 119) and twisted it into an instrument of condemnation and death (cf. Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14). Fallen mankind has taken every good gift God has given beyond its God-given bounds!

Notice the two *hina* (purpose) clauses translated “in order that” and “so that.” PREPOSITIONS clarify the author’s purpose!

▣ **“utterly sinful”** See Special Topic: Paul’s Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1:30. Sin is personified to show the personal nature of evil. See Special Topic: Personal Evil at 16:20.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:14-20

¹⁴For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. ¹⁵For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. ¹⁶But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good. ¹⁷So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. ¹⁹For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. ²⁰But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

7:14 “the Law is spiritual” God’s Law is good. It is not the problem (cf. vv. 12 & 16b).

▣ **“I am of flesh”** This term is used by Paul in (1) a neutral sense meaning physical body (cf. 1:3; 2:28; 4:1; 9:3,5); and (2) a negative sense meaning mankind’s fallen nature in Adam (cf. v. 5). It is uncertain which is being referred to here.

▣ **“sold into bondage to sin”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “I have been and continue to be sold into bondage to sin.” Sin is again personified, here as a slave owner. The agent of the PASSIVE VOICE is uncertain. It could refer to Satan, sin, Paul, or God.

In the OT the major term for God drawing mankind back to Himself was “ransom” or “redeem” (and their synonyms). It originally meant “to buy back” (and its synonyms. See Special Topic at 3:24). The opposite concept is the phrase used here, “sold into the hands of. . .” (cf. Jdgs. 4:2; 10:7; I Sam. 12:9).

7:15-24 The child of God has “the divine nature” (cf. II Pet. 1:4), but also the fallen nature (cf. Gal. 5:17). Potentially, sin is made inoperative (cf. Rom. 6:6), but human experience follows chapter 7. The Jews say that in every man’s heart is a black and a white dog. The one he feeds the most is the one that becomes biggest.

As I read this passage I experientially feel the pain of Paul as he describes the daily conflict of our two natures. Believers have been freed from their fallen nature, but, God help us, we continue to yield to its lure. It is often surprisingly true that the intense spiritual warfare begins after salvation. Maturity is a tension-

filled daily fellowship with the Triune God and a daily conflict with evil (cf. 8:12-25,26; Gal. 5:16-18; Eph. 6:10-18; Col. 3:5-10; see J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*).

7:16,20 “if” These are both FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES, which are viewed as true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes.

7:18 “I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh” Paul is not asserting that the physical body is evil, but that it was the battle ground between the fallen nature and God’s Spirit. The Greeks held that the body, along with all matter, was evil. This developed into the dualistic heresy of Gnosticism (cf. Ephesians, Colossians and I John). The Greeks tended to blame “the physical” for spiritual problems. Paul does not view the spiritual conflict in these terms. He personified sin and used mankind’s rebellion against God’s Law as the opportunity for evil’s invasion of human nature. The term “flesh” in Paul’s writings can mean (1) the physical body which is morally neutral (cf. 1:3; 2:28; 4:1; 9:3,5) and (2) the fallen sin nature inherited from Adam (cf. v. 5). See Special Topic: Flesh (*sarx*) at 1:3.

7:20 “sin which dwells in me” It is interesting that the book of Romans so clearly shows humanity’s sin, but there is no mention of Satan until 16:20. Humans cannot blame Satan for their sin problem. We have a choice. Sin is personified as a king, tyrant, slave owner. It tempts and lures us to independence from God, to self assertion at any cost. Paul’s personification of sin linked to human choice reflects Gen. 4:7.

Paul uses the term “dwells” several times in this chapter (cf. vv. 17,18,20). The sin nature is not destroyed or removed at salvation, but made potentially inoperative. Its continuing powerlessness depends on our cooperation with the indwelling Spirit (cf. 8:9,11). God has provided for believers all that is necessary to combat personified (literary) and personal (Satan and the demonic) evil. It is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. As we accept God’s free gift of salvation, so too, we must accept God’s gift of the effective deterrent of the Holy Spirit. Salvation and the Christian life are a daily process that begins and ends with believers’ daily decisions. God has provided all that we need: the Spirit (Romans 8), spiritual armor (Eph. 6:11), revelation (Eph. 6:17), and prayer (Eph. 6:18).

The battle is fierce (Romans 7), but the battle is won (Romans 8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:21-25

²¹I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. ²²For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, ²³but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

7:22 “the law of God” For the Jews this referred to the Law of Moses. For the non-Jew this referred to

1. the witness of nature (cf. Rom. 1:19-20; Ps. 19:1-6)
2. the inner-moral conscience (cf. Rom. 2:14-15)
3. societal norms or mores



NASB	“in the inner man”
NKJV	“according to the inward man”
NRSV, NJB	“in my inmost self”
TEV	“my inner being”

Paul contrasts the outer man (physical) with the inner man (spiritual) in II Cor. 4:16. In this context the phrase refers to that part of Paul or saved humanity that affirms God's will and law.

1. "the Law is spiritual," 7:14
2. "what I would like to do," 7:15
3. "I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good," 7:16
4. "the wishing is present in me," 7:18
5. "the good that I want," 7:19
6. "I produce the very evil that I do not want," 7:19
7. "I am doing the very thing I do not want," 7:20
8. "the one who wants to do good," 7:21
9. "I joyfully concur with the Law of God," 7:22
10. "the law of my mind," 7:23
11. "I myself with my mind am serving the law of God," 7:25

Chapter 7 shows that knowledge of God and His word is not enough. Believers need the Spirit (chapter 8)!

7:23 There is a real contrast between 6:2; 8:2 and 7:23. This verse clearly shows Paul's use of law (*nomos*) to refer to (1) the law of sin (cf. vv. 21,25) and (2) the law of God (cf. vv. 22, 25). Earlier in vv. 4,5,6,7,9 and 12 Paul used the term for the OT. Paul was not a systematic theologian. He struggled with the concept of "law." In one sense it was God's revelation, a wonderful gift to mankind, yet in another it was that which defined sin and clearly set boundaries that fallen mankind was unable to keep. These boundaries were not only OT revelation (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 119, but all moral guidelines: natural revelation (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:18-3:31) or social mores and norms. Humans are rebels who want to be in complete control of their own lives!

7:24 Can this be a statement from a saved person? Some say no and, therefore, this chapter refers to moral, religious but unredeemed persons. Others say yes, that it refers to the tension of the gospel, "the already and the not yet" in the lives of believers. The eschatological fulfillment has not yet been manifested. The mature believer senses this gap most acutely.



NASB	"the body of this death"
NKJV, NRSV	"this body of death"
TEV	"this body that is taking me to death"
NJB	"this body doomed to die"

The physical body and mind are not evil in and of themselves. They were created by God for life on this planet and fellowship with Him. They were created "very good" (cf. Gen. 1:31). But, Genesis 3 changed mankind and the planet. This is not the world God intended it to be and we are not the people God intended us to be. Sin has radically affected creation. Sin has taken what was good and twisted it into self-centered evil. The body and mind have become the battle ground of temptation and sin. Paul feels the battle acutely! He longs for the new age, the new body, fellowship with God (cf. 8:23).

7:25 This is a summary and a transition to the higher ground of Romans 8. However, even in chapter 8 this same tension is seen in vv. 5-11.

The question for interpreters revolves around of whom is Paul speaking?

1. himself and his experiences within Judaism
2. all Christians
3. Adam as an example of human beings
4. Israel and her knowledge of the Law, but failure to obey it

Personally, I combine #1 (vv. 7-13,25b) and #2 (vv. 14-25a). See Contextual Insights to Rom. 7:7-25. The pain and agony of chapter 7 is matched and surpassed by the majesty of chapter 8!

▣ “Thanks be to God” See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL’S PRAISE, PRAYER, AND THANKSGIVING TO GOD

Paul was a man of praise. He knew the Old Testament. Each of the first four divisions (i.e., books) of the Psalter end with doxologies (cf. Ps. 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48). He praises and extols God in several different ways.

1. opening paragraphs in his letters
 - a. opening benedictions or greetings (cf. Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:3; II Cor. 1:2)
 - b. opening blessings (*eulogētos*, cf. II Cor. 1:3-4; Eph. 1:3-14)
2. short outbursts of praise
 - a. Rom. 1:25; 9:5
 - b. II Cor. 11:31
3. doxologies (characterized by use of [1] *doxa* {i.e., glory} and [2] “for ever and ever”)
 - a. Rom. 11:36; 16:25-27
 - b. Eph. 3:20-21
 - c. Phil. 4:20
 - d. I Tim. 1:17
 - e. II Tim. 4:18
4. thanksgivings (i.e., *eucharisteō*)
 - a. letter openings (cf. Rom. 1:8; I Cor. 1:4; II Cor. 1:11; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3,12; I Thess. 1:2; II Thess. 1:3; Philemon v. 4; I Tim. 1:12; II Tim. 1:3)
 - b. call to give thanks (cf. Eph. 5:4,20; Phil. 4:6; Col. 3:15,17; 4:2; I Thess. 5:18)
5. short outbursts of thanksgiving
 - a. Rom. 6:17; 7:25
 - b. I Cor. 15:57
 - c. II Cor. 2:14; 8:16; 9:15
 - d. I Thess. 2:13
 - e. II Thess. 2:13
6. closing benedictions
 - a. Rom. 16:20,24(?)
 - b. I Cor. 16:23-24
 - c. II Cor. 13:14
 - d. Gal. 6:18
 - e. Eph. 6:24

Paul knew the Triune God theologically and experientially. In his writings he starts out with prayer and praise. In the middle of his presentations he breaks out in praise and thanksgiving. At the conclusion to his letters, he always remembers to pray, praise and thank God. Paul’s writing breathes with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. He knew God, he knew himself, and he knew the gospel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is chapter 6 related to chapter 7?
2. What is the relationship of the Old Testament law to New Testament believers? (cf. II Cor. 3:1-11; Heb. 8:7, 13)
3. What two illustrations does Paul use in chapters 6 and 7 to describe our relationship to our old life?
4. How is the Christian related to the Mosaic Law?
5. Explain in your own words the difference between the autobiographical and representative theories of interpreting Romans 7:7-25.
6. Is Romans 7 a description of a lost person, an immature believer or all believers?

ROMANS 8

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Life in the Spirit 8:1-11	Freed From Indwelling Sin 8:1-11	God's Saving Act 8:1-4 Life in the Flesh and in the Spirit 8:5-8 8:9-11 The Spirit and Adoption	Life in the Spirit 8:1-8 8:9-11	The Life of the Spirit 8:1-11
8:12-17	8:12-17	8:12-17	8:12-17	8:12-13 Children of God 8:14-17
The Glory That is To Be 8:18-25	From Suffering to Glory 8:18-30	The Hope of Fulfillment 8:18-25 Human Weakness is Sustained	The Future Glory 8:18-25	Glory As Our Destiny 8:18-25
8:26-30		8:26-27 8:28-30	8:26-27 8:28-30	8:26-27 God Has Called Us to Share His Glory 8:28-30
God's Love 8:31-39	God's Everlasting Love 8:31-39	Our Confidence in God's Love 8:31-39	God's Love in Christ Jesus 8:31-39	A Hymn to God's Love 8:31-39

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter is the climax of Paul's argument begun in 1:18. It starts with "no condemnation" (legal standing) and ends with "no separation" (personal fellowship). Theologically, it moves from justification through sanctification to glorification (cf. vv. 29-30).
- B. This is Paul's theological development of God's giving of His Spirit to believers (cf. John's presentation in John 14:12-31; 16:7-16). The Spirit is the agent of the PASSIVE VERB in v. 14 that relates to the gospel becoming active in the lives of fallen humans. The Spirit will abide with them and in them and will begin to form Christ in them. Chapter 8 uses the term spirit, *pneuma*, over 21 times while it is totally absent in chapter 7 (as well as chapters 3-6 and occurs only three times in chapters 1-2; it is difficult to be certain when *pneuma* refers to the human spirit or the Holy Spirit).
- C. In life there are two perspectives (personal worldviews), two lifestyles, two priorities, two paths (the broad way and the narrow way) that humans follow, here flesh or Spirit. One leads to death; the other to life. This has traditionally been called "the two ways" of OT wisdom literature (cf. Ps. 1 and Pro. 4:10-19). Eternal life, Spirit life, has observable characteristics (i.e., after the flesh vs. after the Spirit).
- Notice Satan's obvious absence in this entire theological context (cf. Romans 1-8). He is not mentioned in Romans until 16:20. It is mankind's fallen Adamic nature that is in focus. This was Paul's way of removing fallen mankind's excuse (i.e., "the Devil made me do it!") of supernatural temptation for their rebellion against God. Mankind is responsible!
- D. This chapter is very hard to outline because the thought is developed by weaving several threads of truth together in recurring patterns, but without contextual units.
- E. Verses 12-17 inform the believer about a confident faith assurance
1. The first is a changed worldview and life style accomplished through the Spirit.
 2. The second is that our fear of God has been replaced by a sense of family love by the Spirit.
 3. The third is an internal confirmation of our sonship by the indwelling Holy Spirit.
 4. The fourth is that this confirmation is even sure in the midst of this fallen world's problems and struggles.
- F. Verses 31-39 are a court scene, which is a typical literary technique of OT prophets. God is the Judge; Satan is the prosecutor; Jesus is the defense lawyer (paraclete); the angels are the spectators; and believing humanity is under Satanic accusations (i.e., Job 1-2; Zechariah 3).
1. legal terms
 - a. against us (v. 31)
 - b. a charge (v. 33)
 - c. justifies (v. 33)
 - d. condemns (v. 34)
 - e. intercedes (v. 34)
 2. prosecution, "who" (vv. 31,33,34 [thrice],35)
 3. God's provision in Christ (vv. 32, 34b)

4. no separation from God
 - a. earthly circumstances (v. 35)
 - b. OT quote from Ps. 44:22 (v. 36)
 - c. victory (vv. 37,39)
 - d. supernatural circumstances or agents (vv. 37-39)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-8

¹Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

8:1

NASB “Therefore there is now”
 NKJV, NRSV “there is therefore now”
 TEV “**There is**”
 NJB “**the reason, therefore**”

This relates backward to the previous context. Some see it relating to 7:24-25 but it seems best to take it back farther to 3:21-7:25.

▣ “**no**” “No” is first in the Greek sentence. It is emphatic, “no condemnation” to those in Christ (cf. vv. 1-3), and those who walk according to the Spirit (cf. vv. 4-11). Here are both sides of the new covenant.

1. it is a free gift in Christ
2. there is a lifestyle, covenantal response required

Justification (cf. 5:1-11) is both objective (INDICATIVE) and subjective (IMPERATIVE). It is both a state and a lifestyle.

▣ “**condemnation**” This term *katakrima* is not used often in the Septuagint, but it reflects the curse of noncompliance in Deut. 27:26 (cf. Deut. 27:26 quoted in Gal. 3:10 where it is equal to the “curse”). This means “punishment following a judicial sentence.” It is the legal, forensic opposite of justification. It is a rare term in Paul’s writings (cf. 5:16,18) and used nowhere else in the NT.

The concept of condemnation first occurs with Satan accusing God’s people of covenant violations and later non-Israelites like Job (cf. Job 1-2). But now believers have died with Christ to the law (cf. Romans 6) and, therefore, neither the law nor Satan have grounds for accusations.

The King James Version added to verse 1, “who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” This phrase does not appear in many ancient Greek manuscripts in verse 1. The UBS⁴ gives it omission an “A” rating (certain). It does appear in v. 4. It is totally theologically inappropriate in v. 1, but fits perfectly in v. 4. Verses 1-3 are dealing with positional sanctification (INDICATIVE), while verses 4-11 deal with

experiential sanctification (see Special Topic at 6:4) or Christlikeness (IMPERATIVE, see note at 8:29). Notice the footnote on page 289 in William R. Newell's *Romans Verse by Verse*. (Moody, 1938).

"The Revised Version correctly omits "who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Since the King James translation, over 300 years ago, many, and the best, most accurate, ancient Greek manuscripts which we have, have been recovered; and earnest, godly men have gone steadily ahead with the tedious but fruitful work of correcting errors that had crept in copying. For, as we all know, we have not the original manuscripts of Scripture: God has been pleased to withhold these from creatures so prone to idolatry as the sons of men.

We must close verse 1 with the words "in Christ Jesus," for four reasons: (1) The evidence of the Greek manuscripts is overwhelmingly in favor of the omission of the clause "who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" from verse 1,—as the evidence is universally for including these words in verse 4, (2) Spiritual discernment also agrees, for the introduction of these words in verse 1 makes our safety depend upon our walk, and not upon the Spirit of God. But all in Christ Jesus are safe from condemnation, as is plainly taught throughout the epistles. Otherwise, our security depends on our walk, and not on our position in Christ. (3) The clause is plainly in proper place at the end of verse 4,—where the manner of the believer's walk, not his safety from condemnation, is described. (4) That the clause at the end of verse 1 in King James is a *gloss* (marginal note by some copyist) appears, not only from its omission by the great uncial manuscripts, Aleph, A, B, C, D, F, G; A, D (corr.); with some good cursives and ancient versions (see Olshausen, Meyer, Alford, J. F. and B., and Darby's excellent discussion in his *Synopsis, in loc*); but it also appears from the similarity of this gloss to like additions made through legal fear, found in other passages.

That God chose to have His Word translated and still authoritative is seen from the use in the New Testament of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint.

We should thank God for those devoted men who have spent their lifetimes in profound study of the manuscripts God has left us, and who have given us so marvelously perfect a translation as we have. We should distinguish such scholars absolutely and forever from the arrogant "Modernists" (or, in former days, the "Higher Critics"), who undertake to tell us what God *ought* to say in the Bible, rather than with deep humility seeking to find out what God *has* said" (p. 289).

▣ **"for those who are in Christ Jesus"** This characteristic phrase (i.e., a LOCATIVE OF SPHERE) of Paul's is equivalent to the modern expression "personal relationship." Paul knew, loved, served, and rejoiced in Jesus. The gospel is both a message to be believed, and a Person to be welcomed. The power to live issued from his relationship with the Risen Christ, whom he met on the Damascus Road (cf Acts 9). His experience with Jesus preceded his theology of Jesus. His experience issued not in a cloistered mysticism but in aggressive missionary service (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). To know Him is to serve Him. Mature Christianity is a message, a Person, and a lifestyle! (See note at 1:5)

8:2 "the law of the Spirit of life. . . the law of sin and of death" This could refer to

1. the contrast between the law of sin (cf. Rom. 7:10,23,25) and the new law of God (cf. Rom. 7:6,22,25)
2. "the law of love" (cf. James 1:25; 2:8,12) versus "The Mosaic Law" (cf. 7:6-12)
3. the old age versus the new age
4. old covenant versus the new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; the NT book of Hebrews)

This contrasting style is sustained.

1. the law of the Spirit of life in Christ vs. the law of sin and death, v. 2
2. according to the flesh vs. according to the Spirit, vv. 4 & 5
3. things of the flesh vs. things of the Spirit, v. 5
4. mind set on the things of the flesh vs. mind set on the things of the Spirit, v. 5

5. mind set on the flesh, vs. mind set on the Spirit, v. 6
6. in the flesh vs. in the Spirit, v. 9
7. body is dead vs. spirit is alive, v. 10
8. you must die vs. you will live, v. 13
9. not the spirit of slavery vs. the spirit of adoption, v. 15

The NASB Study Bible (p. 1645) has an interesting list on Paul's usages of the term "law" in Romans.

1. a controlling power, 8:2
2. God's law, 2:17-20; 9:31; 10:3-5
3. the Pentateuch, 3:21b
4. the whole OT, 3:19
5. a principle, 3:27



NASB, NRSV,

NJB "has set you free"

NKJV, TEV "had made me free"

Verses 2-3 are the theological message of chapter 6. There are several different PRONOUNS which appear in the ancient Greek texts

1. "me" appears in manuscripts A, D, K & P
2. "you" appears in \aleph , B, F & G
3. "us" appears later in an uncial manuscript, Ψ

The UBS⁴ compilers give "you" (SINGULAR) a "B" rating (almost certain). The UBS³ gave it a "D" rating (great difficulty).

Manuscript variants related to the PRONOUNS "us," "you," or "me/we" are recurrent in Paul's writings.

8:3 "what the law could not do" The Mosaic Law is good and holy, but humanity is weak and sinful (cf. 7:12, 16). The VERB here is really the ADJECTIVE *adunaton*, which usually means "impossible" (cf. Matt. 19:26; Heb. 6:4,18; 10:4; 11:6), but it can mean "without strength" (cf. Acts 14:8; Rom. 15:1). The Law was incapable of providing deliverance (cf. Gal. 3:21). On the contrary, it only provided condemnation, death, and curse (cf. Galatians 3)!

▣ **"weak as it was through the flesh"** This is Paul's basic argument of chapter 7. The Law of God is good and holy, but sinful, fallen, rebellious mankind cannot perform its requirements. Paul, unlike the rabbis, emphasized the consequences of Genesis 3. Most rabbis attribute the instigation of evil into the world at Genesis 6.

▣ **"God *did*: sending His own Son"** What fallen mankind could not do under the Old Covenant, God did under the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-36) through Jesus (cf. Isa. 53; John 3:16). Instead of external requirements God provided an internal Spirit and a new heart and a new mind. This New Covenant is based on repentance and faith in Christ's finished work, not on human performance (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). However, both covenants expect a new lifestyle of godliness (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10).

▣ **"in the likeness of sinful flesh"** This same truth is stated in Phil. 2:7-8. Jesus had a truly human body (but no sin nature, cf. Phil. 2:7-8; Heb. 7:26). He is really one with us. He was tempted in all ways as we are yet without sin (cf. Heb. 4:15). He understands us. He intercedes for us (cf. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24).

▣ **"as an offering for sin"** The italicized words are implied in NJB and in the footnote of NRSV. This same concept is stated in II Cor. 5:21 and I Pet. 2:24. Jesus came to die (cf. Isa. 53:4-6,10-12; Mark 10:45).

Jesus' innocent (blameless) life became a sin offering (cf. John 1:29) for all humanity (cf. Heb. 10:6,8; 13:11).

▣ **“He condemned sin in the flesh”** Jesus' physical death accentuated and dealt with the problem of mankind's sin nature, not just individual acts of sin (as did the Mosaic Law). It was His life, death, resurrection, and ascension that accomplished God's eternal redemptive purpose (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29). He also showed us what humans can be and should be (cf. John 13:15; I Pet. 2:21).

8:4 This verse probably refers to the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:33 & Ezek. 36:26-27). It deals with two aspects of our salvation.

1. Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the Old Covenant and through faith in Him this righteousness is transferred to believers as a free gift apart from personal merit. We call this justification or positional sanctification.
2. God gives believers a new heart, a new mind, and a new spirit. We walk now in the Spirit, not in the flesh. This is called “progressive sanctification.”

Christianity is a new covenant which has both rights (the gift of salvation) and responsibilities (Christlikeness, cf. 6:13).

The *Jerome Bible Commentary* (p. 315) makes the interesting grammatical comment that the PRESENT PARTICIPLE plus the MĒ PARTICLE denotes a conditional statement implying that an effective Christian life does not flow automatically from baptism. We as humans have a choice in salvation and a choice in Christlikeness! The Spirit leads and encourages but does not force compliance!

▣ **“who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit”** This same contrast is found in Gal. 5:16-25. A judicial righteousness is to be accompanied by lifestyle righteousness. The new heart and mind of the New Covenant is not the basis of our salvation, but the result. Eternal life has observable characteristics (Matthew 7)!

8:5 Paul contrasts life in the “flesh” and in the “Spirit” in vv. 5-8 (“the deeds of the flesh,” cf. Gal. 5:19-21 with “fruit of the Spirit,” cf. 5:22-25). See full note at 8:2.

8:6 “the mind set on” Jews realized that the eyes and ears are the windows into the soul. Sin begins in the thought life. We become that which we dwell upon (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 4:8)!

Paul did not exactly follow the traditional rabbinical view of the two “intents” (*yetzers*) in humans. For Paul the good intent was not present in fallen creation, but from conversion. For Paul it was the indwelling Holy Spirit that started the internal spiritual conflict (cf. John 16:7-14).

▣ **“life”** This (*zoē*) refers to eternal life, new age life.

▣ **“peace”** This term originally meant “binding together that which was broken” (cf. John 14:27; 16:33; Phil. 4:7). See Special Topic: Peace at 5:1. There are three ways the NT speaks of peace:

1. the objective truth of our peace with God through Christ (cf. Col. 1:20)
2. our subjective feeling about being right with God (cf. John 14:27; 16:33; Phil. 4:7)
3. God, uniting into one new body, through Christ, both Jew and Gentile (cf. Eph. 2:14-17; Col. 3:15)

8:7-11 Paul described mankind apart from God in several ways.

1. hostile toward God, v. 7
2. not subject to God, v. 7

3. not able to please God, v. 8
4. spiritually dead which will result in eternal death, vv.10-11

See the parallel in Rom. 5:6, 8, and 10.

8:7

NASB, NRSV “the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God”

NKJV “the carnal mind is enmity against God”

TEV “people become enemies of God”

NJB “the outlook of disordered human nature is opposed to God”

Notice that this phrase is parallel to “the mind set on the flesh is death” of v. 6 and “those who walk according to the flesh” of v. 5. Notice, too, fallen human nature is both a mind set (worldview) and a lifestyle (cf. 7:5). See Special Topic: Flesh (*sarx*) at 1:3.

▣ **“for it is not even able to do so”** Fallen mankind not only does not choose to follow God, they are incapable of following God. Fallen mankind, unaided by the Holy Spirit, cannot respond to spiritual things (cf. Isa. 53:6; I Pet. 2:24-25). God must always take the initiative (cf. John 6:44,65). This does not rule out covenant choices, but it does clearly assert that humans are responders, not initiators.

8:8 “those who are in the flesh” Paul uses this phrase in two ways.

1. the physical body (cf. Rom.1:3; 2:28; 4:1; 9:3,5)
2. mankind’s efforts apart from God (cf. Rom. 7:5; 8:4-5)

Here it is #2. It refers to rebellious, unbelieving humanity. See Special Topic: Flesh (*sarx*) at 1:3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:9-11

⁹However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. ¹⁰If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

8:9 “if” There is a series of CONDITIONAL SENTENCES in vv. 9,10,11,13 (twice),17 (twice). They are all FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES, which are assumed true from the writer’s point of view or for his literary purposes. Paul was assuming his readers in the Roman church were Christians (cf. v. 9a).

▣ **“the Spirit of Christ”** Persons either have the Spirit and are, therefore, believers or they do not have the Spirit and are spiritually lost. We receive all of the Holy Spirit at salvation. We do not need more of Him; He needs more of us!

The phrases “the Spirit” of 9a; “the Spirit of God” of 9b, and “the Spirit of Christ” of 9c are all synonymous.

SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS AND THE SPIRIT

There is a fluidity between the work of the Spirit and the Son. G. Campbell Morgan said the best name for the Spirit is “the other Jesus” (however, they are distinct, eternal persons). The following is an outline comparison of the work and titles of the Son and Spirit.

1. Spirit called “Spirit of Jesus” or similar expressions (cf. Rom. 8:9; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; I Pet. 1:11).

2. Both called by the same terms
 - a. “truth”
 - 1) Jesus (John 14:6)
 - 2) Spirit (John 14:17; 16:13)
 - b. “advocate”
 - 1) Jesus (I John 2:1)
 - 2) Spirit (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7)
 - c. “Holy”
 - 1) Jesus (Luke 1:35; 4:34)
 - 2) Spirit (Luke 1:35)
3. Both indwell believers
 - a. Jesus (Matt. 28:20; John 14:20,23; 15:4-5; Rom. 8:10; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27)
 - b. Spirit (John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9,11; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Tim. 1:14)
 - c. Father (John 14:23; II Cor. 6:16)

8:10 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL (*ei* with an assumed INDICATIVE VERB “to be”). Paul assumes his readers (i.e., the church at Rome) are

1. indwelt by Christ
2. have Christ in their midst

▣ **“Christ is in you”** The “you” is PLURAL. The term “Christ” refers to the indwelling Son/Spirit (cf. John 14:16-17; Col. 1:27). People have the Son/Spirit or they are not Christians (cf. I John 5:12). For Paul, “in Christ” is theologically the same as “in the Spirit.”

▣ **“though the body is dead because of sin”** Even Christians are going to die physically because of Adam’s sin, a fallen world, and personal rebellion (cf. 5:12-21). Sin always runs its course. Spiritual death (cf. Genesis 3; Eph. 2:1) resulted in the physical death (cf. Genesis 5; Heb. 9:27, see note at 8:13). Believers live in both the new age of the Spirit (cf. Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:16) and the old age of sin and rebellion (cf. vv. 21, 35).

▣ **“yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness”** There has been some disagreement among translations and commentators on whether “spirit” refers to the human spirit (cf. NASB, ASV, NIV, Williams, Jerusalem Bible), or the Holy Spirit (cf. KJV, TEV, REB, Karl Barth, C. K. Barrett, John Murray, and Everett Harrison).

The larger context expands our understanding of this brief phrase. Even those who have trusted Christ are still going to die because they live in a fallen world. However, because of the righteousness which comes through faith in Jesus they already have eternal life (cf. Eph. 2:4-6). This is the “already but not yet” tension of the Kingdom of God. The old age and the new age have overlapped in time.

▣ **“Righteousness”** In context this could refer to

1. the imputed righteousness (justification and positional sanctification) that comes through faith in Christ (cf. Romans 4)
2. the new life in the Spirit (progressive sanctification) which is the evidence of a redeemed life

See special topic at 1:17.

8:11 “if” See note at verse 9.

▣ **“the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you”** Which Person of the Trinity indwells believers? Most Christians would answer “the Spirit.” This is certainly true, but in reality, all three Persons of the Trinity indwell believers.

1. the Spirit, John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:11; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Tim. 1:14
2. the Son, Matt. 28:20; John 14:20,23; 15:4-5; Rom. 8:10; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27
3. the Father, John 14:23; II Cor. 6:16

This phrase is an excellent opportunity to show that the NT often attributes the works of redemption to all three persons of the Trinity.

1. God the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 10:9; I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; I Thess. 1:10)
2. God the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)
3. God the Spirit raised Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:11)

This same Trinitarian emphasis can be seen in vv. 9-11.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity in unified contexts. The term “trinity,” first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.

- A. the Gospels
 1. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)
 2. John 14:26
- B. Acts – Acts 2:32-33, 38-39
- C. Paul
 1. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
 2. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
 3. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14
 4. Gal. 4:4-6
 5. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
 6. I Thess. 1:2-5
 7. II Thess. 2:13
 8. Titus 3:4-6
- D. Peter – I Pet. 1:2
- E. Jude – vv. 20-21

A plurality in God is hinted at in the OT.

- A. Use of PLURALS for God
 1. Name *Elohim* is PLURAL, but when used of God always has a SINGULAR VERB

2. “Us” in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7
- B. The Angel of the Lord was a visible representative of Deity
 1. Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
 2. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
 3. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 4. Zechariah 3:1-2
- C. God and His Spirit are separate, Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14
- D. God (YHWH) and Messiah (*Adon*) are separate, Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Zech. 2:8-11; 10:9-12
- E. The Messiah and the Spirit are separate, Zech. 12:10
- F. All three are mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The Deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers.

1. Tertullian – subordinated the Son to the Father
2. Origen – subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
3. Arius – denied Deity to the Son and Spirit
4. Monarchianism – believed in a successive manifestation of the one God as Father, Son, then Spirit

The trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material

1. the full Deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, and was affirmed in A.D. 325 by the Council of Nicea
2. the full personality and Deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381)
3. the doctrine of the trinity is fully expressed in Augustine’s work *De Trinitate*

There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

☐ **“will also give life to your mortal bodies”** The VERB is a FUTURE ACTIVE INDICATIVE which points toward Resurrection Day. The resurrection of both Jesus and His followers is a crucial doctrine (cf. I Cor. 15:1ff; II Cor. 4:14). Christianity asserts that believers will have a bodily existence in eternity (cf. I John 3:2). If Christ was raised by the Spirit (cf. I Cor. 15:12-21), so shall His followers (cf. v. 23).

☐

NASB, NKJV,
 NRSV, NJB
 REB, NET
 NRSV footnote
 TEV

“through His Spirit”
“on account of His Spirit”
“by the presence of His Spirit”

There is a manuscript variant related to the grammatical form of this phrase.

1. GENITIVE, MSS \aleph , A, C, P^c
2. ACCUSATIVE, MSS B, D, F, G

The UBS4 gives the GENITIVE a “B” (almost certain) rating.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:12-17

¹²So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the

deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.

8:12 “So then” Paul continues to draw out the implications of his presentation of vv. 1-11.

▣ **“we are under obligation”** This is the other side of Christian freedom (cf. 14:1-15:13). This is the conclusion drawn from the discussion of sanctification in vv. 1-11, which is both positional (INDICATIVE) and progressive (IMPERATIVE, see Special Topic at 6:4). It also clearly shows that believers still must struggle with the old fallen nature (i.e., 6:12,19; 7:7-24; I Cor. 6:18-19; Eph. 6:10-19). There is a choice to be made (initial faith) and continuing choices to be made (lifestyle faith)!

8:13 “if” There is series of CONDITIONAL SENTENCES in vv. 9,10,11,13 (twice), and 17 (twice). They are all FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES, which are assumed true from the writer’s point of view or for his literary purposes. Paul assumed his readers in the Roman church were Christians living by the Spirit. But there is a contingency (i.e., human cooperation).

▣ **“you are living according to the flesh, you must die”** Both VERBALS in v. 13 are PRESENT TENSE, which speaks of continual action. The Bible reveals three stages of death.

1. spiritual death (cf. Gen. 2:17; 3:1-7; Eph. 2:1)
2. physical death (cf. Genesis 5)
3. eternal death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8)

The one spoken of in this passage is the spiritual death of Adam (cf. Gen. 3:14-19) that resulted in the physical death of the human race (cf. Genesis 5).

Adam’s sin brought death into human experience (cf. 5:12-21). Each of us has chosen to participate in sin volitionally. If we choose to remain in it, it will kill us “eternally” (cf. Rev. 20:6, 14, “the second death”). As Christians we must die by a faith identification with Christ to sin and self and live to God (cf. Romans 6).

▣ **“if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live”** Assurance of believers’ salvation is validated or demonstrated by their Christian lifestyle (cf. the NT books of James and I John). Believers do not live this new life in their own effort, but by the agency of the Spirit (cf. v.14). However, they must daily yield themselves to His control (cf. Eph. 5:17-18; 6:10-18).

In this context “the deeds of the body” are seen as the life of the old sinful age (cf. Gal. 5:19-21). This is not a repudiation of the eternality of bodily existence (cf. 8:23), but the contrast between the indwelling Spirit (new age) and the continuing spiritual struggle with sin (old age).

8:14 “all who are being led by the Spirit of God” This is a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which denotes continual guidance from the Spirit. The Spirit woos us to Christ (cf. John 6:44,65) and then forms Christ in us (cf. v. 29-30). There is more to Christianity than a decision. It really is an ongoing discipleship (cf. Matt. 28:19) that begins with a decision (cf. 10:9-13; John 1:12; 3:16). This does not refer to special events, times, or ministries, but daily activities.

▣ **“sons of God”** This PLURAL phrase was used in the OT for angels and rarely for humans (see Special Topic online at www.freebiblecommentary.org). The SINGULAR was used of Adam, Israel, her King, and

the Messiah. Here it refers to all believers (cf. Gal. 4:6-7). In v. 14 the Greek term *huiioi* (sons) is used, in v. 16, *tekna* (children). They are used synonymously in this context. Believers are no longer slaves but family members (cf. vv. 15-17; Gal. 4:7).

8:15 “a spirit” This verse, like v. 10, is ambiguous. It can refer to redeemed mankind’s new spirit in Christ or the Holy Spirit. Both are found in verse 16.

There are several places in Paul’s writings where this grammatical construction is used to describe what the Holy Spirit produces in the individual believer.

1. here “not a spirit of slavery,” “a spirit of adoptions, v. 15
2. “a spirit of gentleness,” I Cor. 4:21
3. “a spirit of faith (faithfulness), II Cor. 4:13
4. “a spirit of wisdom and of revelation,” Eph. 1:17
5. “not a spirit of timidity,” II Tim. 1:7

There are several places, especially in I Corinthians, where Paul uses *pneuma* to refer to himself (cf. I Cor. 2:11; 5:3,14; 7:34; 16:8; and Col. 2:5). In this context surely vv. 10 and 15 fit this category best.

▣ **“of slavery leading to fear again”** The characteristic of the old nature is fear (cf. Heb. 2:15). The characteristic of the new nature is described in vv. 14-17.

▣ **“adoption as sons”** Roman law made it very difficult to adopt, but once done, it was permanent (cf. Gal. 4:4-6). This metaphor supports the theological truth of the security of the believer (see Special Topic at 5:2). A natural son could be disinherited or even killed, but not an adopted one. This was one of Paul’s favorite familial metaphors to describe salvation (cf. vv. 15, 23). John and Peter used another familial metaphor, “born again” (cf. John 3:3; I Peter 1:3,23). For the full note see Galatians 4:5 online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

▣ **“Abba”** This Aramaic term was what children called their fathers at home (“daddy” or “papa”). Jesus and the Apostles spoke Aramaic (cf. Mark 5:41; 14:36; I Cor. 16:22). Believers can now come to the Holy God by means of the blood of Christ, through the indwelling Spirit with a firm faith and family confidence (cf. Mark 14:36; Gal. 4:6). Isn’t it amazing that fallen humanity can call God, Father, and that the eternal Holy One would desire this! See Special Topic: Father at 1:7.

8:16 “The Spirit, Himself” The Greek word for Spirit is NEUTER, therefore, KJV translated this as “the Spirit, itself,” but the Spirit is a person; He can be grieved (cf. Eph. 4:30; I Thess. 5:19), so “Himself” is a better translation. See Special Topic: The Personhood of the Spirit at 8:27.

▣ **“testifies with our spirits that we are children of God”** As noted in v. 13, one aspect of faith assurance is the believers’ changed and changing lives (cf. the NT books of James and I John). Another aspect of assurance is that the indwelling Spirit has replaced the fear of God with family love (cf. I John 4:17-18).

Note the RSV and NRSV translations and punctuation, “when we cry, Abba! Father! It is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirits that we are children of God” (cf. Gal. 4:6). This implies that the assurance comes when believers can call God, Father, by the Spirit.

The internal witness of the Spirit is not audible, but practical.

1. guilt over sin
2. desire to be like Christ
3. desire to be with the family of God
4. hunger for God’s word

5. sense a need to do evangelism
6. sense a need for Christian sacrificial giving

These are the kinds of internal desires that provide a faith evidence of conversion.

Assurance of salvation has been turned into a denominational issue.

1. Roman Catholic theology denies the possibility of assurance in this life but bases confidence in one being a member of the “true” church
2. John Calvin (Reform tradition) based assurance on election (predestination), but one could not know for sure until after this life on Judgment Day
3. John Wesley (Methodist tradition) based assurance on a perfect love (living above known sin)
4. most Baptists have tended to base assurance on the biblical promises of free grace (but ignoring all the warnings and admonitions).

There are two dangers related to the NT paradoxical presentation of Christian assurance.

1. the overemphasis on “once saved, always saved”
2. the overemphasis on human performance in retaining salvation.

Hebrews 6 clearly teaches “once out, always out.” Human effort (good works) does not keep believers saved (cf. Gal. 3:1-14). But good works are the goal of the Christian life (cf. Eph. 2:10). They are the natural result of meeting God and having the indwelling Spirit. They are evidence of one’s true conversion.

Assurance is not meant to soften the Bible’s call to holiness! Theologically speaking, assurance is based on the character and actions of the Triune God.

1. the Father’s love and mercy
2. the Son’s finished sacrificial work
3. the Spirit’s wooing to Christ and then forming Christ in the repentant believer

The evidence of this salvation is a changed worldview, a changed heart, a changed lifestyle and a changed hope! It cannot be based on a past emotional decision that has no lifestyle evidence (i.e., fruit, cf. Matt. 7:15-23; 13:20-22; John 15). Assurance, like salvation, like the Christian life starts with a response to God’s mercy and continues that response throughout life. It is a changed and changing life of faith!

▣ **“testifies”** This is another *syn* compound. The Spirit co-witnesses with the believer’s spirit. Paul uses this compound term in 2:15; 8:16 and 9:1.

8:17 “if” There is a series CONDITIONAL SENTENCES in vv. 9,10,11,13 (twice), and 17 (twice). These are all FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which are assumed true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Paul assumed his readers in the Roman church were Christian.

▣ In this verse there are three compound words using *syn*, which means “joint participation with”

1. believers share heirship with Christ
2. believers share sufferings with Christ
3. believers will share glory with Christ

There are more *syn* compounds in vv. 22 (twice), 26,28. Eph. 2:5-6 also has three *syn* compounds which describe the believer’s life in Christ.

▣ **“heirs”** This is another family metaphor to describing believers (cf. 4:13-14; 9:8; Gal. 3:29). See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVERS' INHERITANCE

The Scriptures talk about believers inheriting (cf. Acts 20:32; 26:18; Eph. 1:4; Col. 1:12; 3:24) many things because of their family relationship with Jesus who is heir of all things (cf. Heb. 1:2), and they as coheirs (cf. Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7) of

- the kingdom (cf. Matt. 25:34, I Cor. 6:9-10; 15:50; Eph. 5:5)
- eternal life (cf. Matt. 19:29; Heb. 9:15)
- God's promises (cf. Heb. 6:12)
- God's protection of His promises (cf. I Pet. 1:4-5)

▣ **“fellow heirs”** This is another *sun* compound. Paul coins many of these new terms in chapter 8 to emphasize the shared death and life of Christ and the believers.

1. co-heirs, v. 17
2. co-suffered, v. 17
3. co-glorified, v. 17



NASB, NKJV “if indeed we suffer with Him”
NRSV “if, in fact, we suffer with him”
TEV “for if we share Christ’s sufferings”
NJB “sharing his sufferings”

Suffering is the norm for believers in a fallen world (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:1-2; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; II Cor. 4:16-18; Phil. 1:29; I Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 4:12-19). Jesus set the pattern (cf. Heb. 5:8). The rest of this chapter develops this theme. See Special Topic: Why Do Christians Suffer? At 5:3.

▣ **“glorified with Him”** In John’s writings whenever Jesus talked of His death, He called it “being glorified.” Jesus was glorified by His suffering. Believers, positionally and often experientially, share Jesus’ life events (cf. Romans 6). See Special Topic: Reigning in the Kingdom of God at 5:17-18.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:18-25

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. ²³And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. ²⁴For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

8:18 “consider” This is literally “add it up.” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE INDICATIVE. Paul continues to consider the implications of Christian suffering. This was an accounting term for arriving at a carefully researched conclusion. This is a recurrent theme in Romans (see note at 2:3). Believers must live in the light of the spiritual truths they understand.

▣ **“the sufferings”** We get some idea of the sufferings involved in serving Christ from I Cor. 4:9-12; II Cor. 4:7-12; 6:4-10; 11:24-27; Heb. 11:35-38.

▣ **“of this present time”** The Jews believed that the history of the world was divided into two ages, the current evil age and the age of righteousness to come (cf. Matt. 12:32; Mark 10:30). The OT expected the coming Messiah to set up this new age of righteousness. However, the two comings of Christ, one as Savior (incarnation) and the second as Lord (Second Coming), caused the overlapping of these two ages. Believers live in the tension between “already” and “not yet” of the Kingdom of God. See Special Topic: This Age and the Age to Come at 12:2.

▣ **“worthy. . .glory”** Both of these terms are related to the OT concept of weight—heavy was valuable. “Worthy” was from a commercial term that meant “to weigh as much as.” The Hebrew term “glory” was also from a root “to be heavy,” in the sense of being valuable, like gold. See full note at 3:23.

The term “glory” in Paul’s writings had an eschatological orientation (cf. II Cor. 4:16-18). It referred to the splendor and power of the returning glorified exalted Christ (cf. Col. 3:4). See Special Topic: Glory at 3:23.

▣ **“that is to be revealed to us”** This PASSIVE (deponent) VOICE referred to the agency of God or the Spirit (cf. v. 20). Believers live in this life by faith not sight (cf. v. 24; I Cor. 2:9; 13:12; II Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1).

The word is used several times in Romans by Paul and emphasizes that truth is from God, not a discovery of humans.

1. the VERB
 - a. 1:17 – the righteousness of God has been revealed (PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE)
 - b. 1:18 – the wrath of God has been revealed (PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE)
 - c. 8:18 – the coming glory to be revealed (AORIST PASSIVE INFINITIVE)
2. the NOUN
 - a. 2:5 – in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God
 - b. 8:19 – creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God
 - c. 16:25 – according to the revelation of the mystery

8:19 “the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly” The physical creation is personified as a person with an outstretched neck searching the horizon. Creation was negatively affected when Adam and Eve rebelled (cf. Gen. 3:17-19). All creation will ultimately be redeemed (except for rebellious angels, unbelieving humans, and their prepared place of isolation, cf. Bruce Corley and Curtis Vaughan, *Romans*, p. 95, footnote 46).

The VERB “waits eagerly” (PRESENT MIDDLE [deponent] INDICATIVE) appears three times in this context.

1. v. 19 – creation waits eagerly for the new age
2. v. 23 – believers wait eagerly for new bodies
3. v. 25 – believers wait eagerly in hope of the new age

Paul uses this same VERB in a similar sense in I Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20. The Second Coming is not a fearful event for believers, but a family reunion!

SPECIAL TOPIC: NATURAL RESOURCES

I. Introduction

- A. All creation is the backdrop or stage for God’s love affair with mankind.
- B. It shares in the fall (cf. Gen. 3:17; 6:1ff; Isa. 24:3-8; Rom. 8:18-20). Also, it will share in eschatological redemption (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; Rom. 8:20-22; Rev. 21-22).

C. Sinful, fallen mankind has raped the natural environment with selfish abandon. Following is a quote from *The Canon of Westminster* by Edward Carpenter.

“...man’s relentless assault, in a global context, upon the universe around him—that is on God’s creation—an attack on the air which he pollutes; the natural waterways which he befouls; the soil which he poisons; the forests which he hews down, heedless of the long-term affects of this wanton destruction. This attack is piecemeal and uncoordinated. Scant regard is paid to any balance of nature and consequently little sense of responsibility for what one generation owes to another.”

D. Not only are we reaping the result of pollution and exploitation of our planet, but our posterity will reap even more severe, non-reversible consequences.

II. Biblical Material

A. Old Testament

1. Genesis 1-3

- a. Creation is a special place created by God for fellowship with mankind (cf. Gen. 1:1-25).
- b. Creation is good (cf. Gen. 1:4,10,12,18,21,25), yea, very good (cf. Gen. 1:31). It is meant to be a witness to God (cf. Ps. 19:1-16).
- c. Humanity is the crowning purpose of creation (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).
- d. Humanity was meant to exercise dominion (Hebrew, “to tread”) as a steward to God (cf. Gen. 1:28-30; Psalm 8:3-8; Hebrews 2:6-8). God is and remains the Creator/Sustainer/Redeemer/Lord of creation (cf. Exod. 19:5; Job 37-41; Psalm 24:1-2; 95:3-5; 102:25; 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6; Isa. 37:16).
- e. Mankind’s stewardship of creation can be seen in Gen. 2:15, “to cultivate it and preserve and protect it” (cf. Lev. 25:23; I Chr. 29:14).

2. God loves creation, especially animals.

- a. Mosaic laws for proper treatment of animals
- b. YHWH playing with Leviathan (cf. Ps. 104:26)
- c. God cares for animals (cf. Jonah 4:11)
- d. Eschatological presence of nature (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; Revelation 21-22)

3. Nature, to some extent, glorifies God.

- a. Psalm 19:1-6
- b. Psalm 29:1-9
- c. Job 37-41

4. Nature is one means by which God shows His love and loyalty to the covenant.

- a. Deut. 27-28; I Kings 17
- b. Throughout the prophets

B. New Testament

1. God is seen as creator. There is only one Creator, the Triune God (Elohim, Gen. 1:1; the Spirit, Gen. 1:2; and Jesus, the NT). All else is created.

- a. Acts 17:24
- b. Hebrews 11:3
- c. Revelation 4:11

2. Jesus is God's agent of creation
 - a. John 1:3,10
 - b. I Corinthians 8:6
 - c. Colossians 1:16
 - d. Hebrews 1:2
3. Jesus speaks of God's care for nature in an indirect way in His sermons
 - a. Matthew 6:26,28-30, birds of the air and lilies of the field
 - b. Matthew 10:29, sparrows
4. Paul asserts that all humans are responsible for their knowledge of God in creation (i.e natural revelation, cf. Rom. 1:19-20; Rev. 21-22).

III. Conclusion

- A. We are bound to this natural order!
- B. Sinful mankind has abused God's gift of nature as they have all the other good gifts of God.
- C. This natural order is temporal. It is going to pass away (II Pet. 3:7). God is moving our world to a historical nexus. Sin will run its course, but God has determined its bounds. Creation will be redeemed (cf. Rom. 8:18-25).

▣ **“for the revealing”** This term meant “to pull back the curtain” so as to disclose or inform. It is also the title of the last book of the New Testament, “the Apocalypse.” The Second Coming is often referred to as a revelation or coming (cf. I Cor. 1:7-8; I Peter 17,13).

▣ **“the sons of God”** This was a common familial metaphor used to describe Christians (cf. 8:14,16). It speaks of God as Father and Jesus as His unique son (cf. John 1:18; 3:16,18; Heb. 1:2; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28; I John 4:9).

In the OT Israel was God's son (cf. Hosea 11:1), but also the King was God's son (cf. II Sam. 7). This concept was first mentioned in the NT in Matt. 5:9 (also cf. John 1:12; II Cor. 6:18; Gal. 3:26; I John 3:1,10; Rev. 21:7).

8:20

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

“for the creation was subjected to futility”

TEV

“For creation was condemned to become worthless”

NJB

“It was not for any fault on the part of creation that it was made unable to attain its purpose”

This could be translated “vanity.” It is used in several senses in the Septuagint—meaningless, worthless, useless, false gods (idols), and emptiness. All creation became useless for God's intended purpose (cf. Gen. 3:17-19; Isa. 24:3-8), but one day God will remove the curse of the Fall (cf. Rev. 22:3). This is not the world that God intended it to be!

▣ **“but because of Him who subjected it, in hope”** The VERB IS AORIST PASSIVE and apparently refers to God (cf. NASB, NKJV, TEV). He subjected physical creation to futility

1. because of human rebellion
2. as an attempt to turn mankind to Himself (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29)

This purposeful futility will only be for a period of time (cf. Rom. 11:11-32). Redeemed humanity has a promised physical future (body and world).

God foreknew Adam's rebellion. He allowed it to occur and chose to work with a fallen mankind in a fallen world. This is not the world that God intended it to be. This is not the world it will one day be (cf. II Pet. 3:10; Rev. 21:1-3). See notes on "hope" at 5:2.

8:21 "creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption" Nature will be a part of eternity (cf. Isa. 11:6-10). Heaven is coming back to a recreated earth (cf. Matt. 5:18; 24:35; II Pet. 3:10; Rev. 21:1). The future may well be a return to Eden's bliss; fellowship between God and mankind, individual to individual, mankind to animals, and mankind to the earth! The Bible begins with God, mankind, and the animals (i.e., Isa. 11:6-9) in fellowship and harmony in a garden setting (cf. Gen. 1-2) and the Bible ends in a similar way (cf. Revelation 21-22).

▣ **"corruption"** See Special Topic at 1:23.

▣ **"into the freedom of the glory of the children of God"** In v. 14 believers are called "the sons of God," in v. 16 "the children of God," and inv. 17 "heirs of God." In v. 18 the eschatological glory of God is revealed to believers. Now in 19 creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God because it will share their eschatological glory (cf. v. 21). This restoration of creation, and especially humans, will allow the original purpose of creation to be fulfilled—God and humanity (made in His image) in intimate fellowship.

8:22 "the whole creation groans" This is another of Paul's *syn* compounds, "groan together with." He must have coined many of them. Possibly he was alluding to Jer. 12:4,11 (cf. Deut. 27-29), where the land of Israel mourns because of the desolation caused by human sin.

Notice that "groaning" is mentioned three times in this context.

1. creation groans (PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE) for the coming of the new age, v. 22 (cf. vv. 19-21)
2. believers groan for their full and complete salvation (i.e., a new body, cf. II Cor. 5:2,4), v. 23
3. the Spirit who gives Himself as the first fruit of the new age also groans (prays for, PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE) believers, v. 26

▣ **"suffers the pains of childbirth"** In Jewish circles this concept was often called "the birth pains of the new age" (cf. Mark 13:8). The dawn of the new day of righteousness will not be without problems. The moral and spiritual conditions of this fallen planet will become worse and worse (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; II Thess. 2:1-12; and also note the seven seals, trumpets, and bowls of Revelation 5-18). However, the pains of childbirth are pains of hope and joy in the coming birth, so too, the new age!

8:23 "we ourselves. . .we ourselves. . .ourselves" The PRONOUNS are emphatic and repeated.

▣ **"the first fruits of the Spirit"** This term (*aparchē*) is theologically analogous to "the seal of the Spirit" in II Cor. 1:22; and "the pledge of the Spirit" in II Cor. 5:5; and Eph. 1:14.

The first fruits in the OT were a promise of the harvest to come. They symbolized God's ownership of all the harvest (i.e., Deut. 26:1-11). The Spirit is the first fruits of the new age, as Jesus was the first fruits of the resurrection (cf. I Cor. 15:20). Believers, as God's children, even now experience something of the joys of heaven by means of the Holy Spirit who dwells with them and in them. This is the "already" but "not yet" tension of the overlapping of the two Jewish ages. Believers are citizens of heaven and dwellers on earth!

▣ **“we ourselves, groan within ourselves”** This seems to refer to the dialectic tension between “the already” and “the not yet” of the overlapping of the two Jewish ages (see Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 145-148). The Kingdom of God is present but not consummated. Believers have resurrection life, yet they are still going to die physically (cf. II Cor. 5:2-4). We are saved from sin but we still struggle with sin (Romans 7; Eph. 6:10-18).

▣ **“waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons”** Adoption is Paul’s favorite familial metaphor for salvation (cf. v. 15). Believers’ salvation is a process that starts with an initial decision of repentance and faith and develops into a growing Christlikeness. Believers will not be fully saved until Resurrection Day (cf. v. 30 and I John 3:2).

The term “adoption” is omitted in some Greek manuscripts (cf. MSS P⁴⁶, D, F, G, and some Old Latin versions. However, it is included in \aleph , A, B, C, some Old Latin, the Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian versions. The UBS⁴ rates its inclusion as “A”(certain).

▣ **“the redemption of our body”** This term means “to buy back.” This concept was used in the OT to describe someone being set free from slavery by a relative (*go’el*). It came to be used metaphorically for God’s deliverance of fallen mankind from the slavery of sin. The price paid was the sinless life of the incarnate Son. See Special Topic at 3:24.

Christianity, like Judaism (cf. Job 14:14-15; 19:25-26; Dan. 12:2), asserts that believers will have a physical (though not necessarily humanoid, cf. I Cor. 15:35-49) body in eternity. Believers’ spiritual bodies will be perfectly prepared for life in the new age, life in intimate fellowship with God.

8:24 “in hope we have been saved” This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE. As v. 23 refers to our future salvation, v. 24 refers to our past salvation through the agency of the Spirit. The NT used several VERB TENSES to describe salvation (see Special Topic at 10:4).

1. AORIST, Acts 15:11 (Rom. 8:24; II Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5; and Rom. 13:11 combine the AORIST with a FUTURE orientation)
2. PERFECT, Eph. 2:5,8
3. PRESENT, I Cor. 1:18; 15:2; II Cor. 2:15; I Pet. 3:21; 4:18
4. FUTURE (in VERB TENSE or contextual inference), Rom. 5:9,10; 10:9; I Cor. 3:15; Phil. 1:28; I Thess. 5:8-9; Heb. 1:14; 9:28.

Therefore, salvation begins with an initial faith decision and issues in a process of lifestyle faith that will one day be consummated in sight (cf. I John 3:2).

8:25 “hope” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE

Paul used this term often in several different but related senses. Often it was associated with the consummation of the believer’s faith (e.g., I Tim. 1:1). This can be expressed as glory, eternal life, ultimate salvation, Second Coming, etc. The consummation is certain, but the time element is future and unknown. It was often associated with “faith” and “love” (cf. I Cor. 13:13; I Thess. 1:3; II Thess. 2:16). A partial list of some of Paul’s uses are:

1. The Second Coming, Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18; 4:4; Titus 2:13
2. Jesus is our hope, I Tim. 1:1
3. The believer to be presented to God, Col. 1:22-23; I Thess. 2:19
4. Hope is laid up in heaven, Col. 1:5

5. Trust in the gospel, Col. 1:23; I Thess. 2:19
6. Ultimate salvation, Col. 1:5; I Thess. 4:13; 5:8
7. The glory of God, Rom. 5:2, II Cor. 3:12; Col. 1:27
8. The salvation of the Gentiles by Christ, Col. 1:27
9. Assurance of salvation, I Thess. 5:8
10. Eternal life, Titus 1:2; 3:7
11. Results of Christian maturity, Rom. 5:2-5
12. Redemption of all creation, Rom. 8:20-22
13. Adoption's consummation, Rom. 8:23-25
14. Title for God, Rom. 15:13
15. Paul's desire for believers, II Cor. 1:7
16. OT as a guide to NT believers, Rom. 15:4

▣ **“with perseverance”** This term *hupomonē* was also used in 5:3 and 15:4-5. Believers' salvation is in the process of maturity and will one day be consummated. Perseverance (cf. Rev. 2:8,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7) is the needed biblical balance to the overemphasis on “initial salvation.” Most biblical truths (i.e., Eastern Literature, see Special Topic at 3:27) are expressed in dialectical, tension-filled pairs.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE

The biblical doctrines related to the Christian life are difficult to explain because they are presented in typically eastern dialectical pairs. These pairs seem contradictory, yet both are biblical. Western Christians have tended to choose one truth and ignore or depreciate the opposite truth. Let me illustrate.

- A. Is salvation an initial decision to trust Christ or a lifetime commitment to discipleship?
- B. Is salvation an election by means of grace from a sovereign God or mankind's believing and repentant response to a divine offer?
- C. Is salvation, once received, impossible to lose, or is there a need for continual diligence?

The issue of perseverance has been contentious throughout church history. The problem begins with apparently conflicting passages of the NT:

- A. texts on assurance
 1. statements of Jesus (John 6:37; 10:28-29)
 2. statements of Paul (Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 1:13; 2:5,8-9; Phil. 1:6; 2:13; II Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 1:12; 4:18)
 3. statements of Peter (I Pet. 1:4-5)
- B. texts on the need for perseverance
 1. statements of Jesus (Matt. 10:22; 13:1-9,24-30; 24:13; Mark 13:13; John 8:31; 15:4-10; Rev. 2:7,17,20; 3:5,12,21)
 2. statements of Paul (Rom. 11:22; I Cor. 15:2; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:6; 3:4; 5:4; 6:9; Phil. 2:12; 3:18-20; Col. 1:23)
 3. statements of the author of Hebrews (2:1; 3:6,14; 4:14; 6:11)
 4. statements of John (I John 2:6; II John 9)
 5. statement of the Father (Rev. 21:7)

Biblical salvation issues from the love, mercy, and grace of a sovereign Triune God. No human can be saved without the initiation of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65). Deity comes first and sets the agenda, but demands that humans must respond in faith and repentance, both initially and continually. God works with mankind in a covenant relationship. There are privileges and responsibilities!

Salvation is offered to all humans. Jesus' death dealt with the fallen creation's sin problem. God has provided a way and wants all those made in His image to respond to His love and provision in Jesus.

If you would like to read more on this subject from a non-Calvinistic perspective, see

1. Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth*, Eerdmans, 1981 (pp. 348-365)
2. Howard Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God*, Bethany Fellowship, 1969
3. Robert Shank, *Life in the Son*, Westcott, 1961

The Bible is addressing two different problems in this area: (1) taking assurance as a license to live fruitless, selfish lives and (2) encouraging those who struggle with ministry and personal sin. The problem is that the wrong groups are taking the wrong message and building theological systems on limited biblical passages. Some Christians desperately need the message of assurance, while others need the stern warnings! Which group are you in?

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:26-27

²⁶In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; ²⁷and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

8:26 “in the same way” This links the Spirit's ministry of intercession with “the groaning and hoping” mentioned in vv. 18-25.

▣ **“the Spirit also helps”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE. The VERB has a double compound, *syn* (cf. v. 28) and *anti*. It is best translated “take hold with.” This term is found only here and in Luke 10:40. The whole Triune God is for believers. The Father sent the Son to die on mankind's behalf (cf. John 3:16, and He now also intercedes for us (cf. v. 34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; I John 2:1). The Spirit brings fallen mankind to Christ and forms Christ in them (cf. John 16:8-15). However, the VERB “helps,” which meant “to take hold of with someone,” implied that believers also have a part in appropriating the Spirit's help (intercession).

▣ **“weakness”** This NOUN is used by Paul in several senses (BAGD, p. 115).

1. bodily weakness or sickness, II Cor. 11:30; 12:5,9,10; Gal. 4:13; I Tim. 5:23
2. human situation, I Cor. 15:43; II Cor. 13:4
3. figure for
 - a. timidity, I Cor. 2:3
 - b. judgment, Rom. 6:19
 - c. lack of religious insight, Rom. 8:26

The VERB is used in similar ways.

1. bodily weakness, Phil. 2:26-27; II Tim. 4:20
2. human situation, Rom. 8:3; II Cor. 11:21; (note Matt. 8:17; quote of Isa. 53:4)

3. figure for
 - a. religious or moral weakness, Rom. 14:2; I Cor. 8:11-12
 - b. weak in faith, Rom. 4:19; 14:1
 - c. fainthearted and fearful, II Cor. 11:29

Remember context determines meaning within a semantic parameter. Lexicons only list the possible connotations and usages.

▣ **“the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words”** Believers groan in their fallenness and the Spirit groans in intercession for them. The Spirit within the redeemed prays for them, and Jesus at the right hand of God also prays for them, (cf. vv. 27,34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; I John 2:1). This intercession empowers the believer to pray (cf. v. 15; Gal. 4:6). This passage in context does not refer to the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues, but the Spirit’s intercession to the Father on believers’ behalf.



NASB, NRSV “too deep for words”

NKJV “which cannot be uttered”

TEV “that words can not express”

NJB “that cannot be put into words”

This word is the common word for “speaking,” “language” (cf. I Cor. 13:1) with the ALPHA PRIVATIVE. It occurs only here in the NT. Another form of the word is used in Mark’s Gospel for dumb/mute people (cf. 7:37; 9:17,25).

▣ **“intercedes”** See Special Topic: Paul’s Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1:30.

8:27 “He who searches the heart” This was a recurrent theme in the OT (cf. I Sam. 2:7; 16:7; I Kgs. 8:39; I Chr. 28:9; II Chr. 6:30; Ps. 7:9; 44:21; Pro. 15:11; 20:27; 21:2; Jer. 11:20; 17:9-10; 20:12; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; 15:8). God truly knows us and still loves us (cf. Psalm 139).

▣ **“He intercedes for the saints”** The Spirit’s tasks were clearly spelled out in John 16:2-15. One of them is intercession.

The term “saints” was always PLURAL except in Phil. 4:21 where it also referred to all believers. Christians are members of the family of God, the body of Christ, the new temple built from individual believers. This is a needed theological balance to western (American) individualism. See Special Topic: Saints at 1:7.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT

In the OT “the Spirit of God” (i.e., *ruach*) was a force which accomplished YHWH’s purpose, but there is no hint that it was personal (i.e., OT monotheism). However, in the NT the full personality and personhood of the Spirit is documented.

1. He can be blasphemed (cf. Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:29)
2. He teaches (cf. Luke 12:12; John 14:26)
3. He bears witness (cf. John 15:26)
4. He convicts, guides (cf. John 16:7-15)
5. He is called “who” (i.e., *hos*) (cf. Eph. 1:14)
6. He can be grieved (cf. Eph. 4:30)
7. He can be quenched (cf. I Thess. 5:19)

Trinitarian texts also speak of three persons.

1. Matt. 28:19
2. II Cor. 13:14
3. I Pet. 1:2

The Spirit is linked to human activity.

1. Acts 15:28
2. Rom. 8:26
3. I Cor. 12:11
4. Eph. 4:30

At the very beginning of Acts the Spirit's role is emphasized. Pentecost was not the beginning of the work of the Spirit, but a new chapter. Jesus always had the Spirit. His baptism was not the beginning of the work of the Spirit, but a new chapter. Luke prepares the church for a new chapter of effective ministry. Jesus is still the focus, the Spirit is still the effective means and the Father's love, forgiveness, and restoration of all humans made in His image is the goal!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:28-30

²⁸And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

8:28 “And we know” This VERB (*oida*) occurs four times in this context.

1. believers know that all creation groans (v. 22)
2. believers do not know how to pray (v. 26)
3. the Father knows the hearts of humans and the mind of the Spirit (v. 27)
4. believers know that all things work together for good (v. 28)



NASB, TCNT “God causes all things”

NKJV, NRSV,

NET “all things”

TEV, NIV “in all things God works”

The textual question is how many times does “*Theos*” (or “*Theon*”) appear in this verse?

There is no manuscript variant related to the phrase “to those who love God,” but there is a variant related to the phrase “all things work together for good.”

1. Some manuscripts add “*ho Theos*” after the VERB, P⁴⁶, A, B, 81, and some Coptic and Ethiopian versions.
2. Most manuscripts omit it, **ℵ**, C, D, F, G, and the Vulgate, Peshitta, Armenian versions. The UBS⁴ rates its omission as “B” (almost certain).

The NASB includes it to stress the point of divine activity. It is possible from the context that the Spirit's agency is indented (cf. v. 27; NEB, REB).

▣ **“to work together for good”** This is PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. This is another compound with *syn* (cf. v. 26). Therefore, it literally means “all things continue to work in cooperation with one another for the

good.” This is a difficult concept in a world of evil and suffering (two helpful books on this subject is *The Goodness of God* by Wenham and Hannah Whithall Smith, *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life*). The “good” here is defined in v. 29 as “conformed to the image of His Son.” Christlikeness, not prosperity, fame or health, is God’s unalterable plan for every believer.

▣ **“to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”** These are two PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLES. These are two conditions which continue to allow the believer to view life, regardless of the circumstances, in a positive light (cf. v. 15). Again notice the twin covenantal aspects of human freedom (“love”) and God’s sovereignty (“called”).

The term “purpose” in connection to God’s eternal plans is found in Rom. 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 3:11; and II Tim. 1:9. God has an eternal redemptive plan for fallen humanity. See Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 1:5.

8:29-30 The VERBS in these verses are all AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVES. They form a chain from before time until time is no more. God knows us and is still for us and wants us to be with Him. This is a corporate, not individual, context. The final act of glorification is still future, but in this context it is stated as an accomplished event.

8:29 “foreknew” Paul used this term twice, here and 11:2. In 11:2 it referred to God’s covenant love for Israel before time. Remember that the term “know” in Hebrew related to intimate, personal relationship, not to facts about someone (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). Here it is included in a chain of events (cf. vv. 29-30). This term is linked with predestination. However, it must be stated that God’s foreknowledge is not the basis of election because if that were so, then election would be based on fallen humanity’s future response, which would be human performance. This term was also found in Acts 26:5; I Pet. 1:2,20 and II Pet. 3:17.

▣ **“predestined”** The terms “foreknow” (*proginōskō*) or “predestine” (*proorizō*) are both compounds with the PREPOSITION “before” (*pro*) and therefore, should be translated “to know before,” “to set bounds before,” or “mark off before.”

The definitive passages on predestination in the NT are Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-14 and Romans 9. These texts obviously stress that God is sovereign. He is in total control of all things, including human history. There is a preset divine redemption plan being worked out in time. However, this plan is not arbitrary or selective. It is based not only on God’s sovereignty and foreknowledge, but on His unchanging character of love, mercy and undeserved grace.

We must be careful of our western (American) individualism or our evangelical zeal coloring this wonderful truth. We must also guard against being polarized into the historical, theological conflicts between Augustine versus Pelagius or Calvinism versus Arminianism.

Predestination is not a doctrine meant to limit God’s love, grace, and mercy nor to exclude some from the gospel. It is meant to strengthen believers by molding their worldview. God is for all mankind (cf. John 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). God is in control of all things. Who or what can separate us from Him (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)? Predestination forms one of two ways to view life. God views all history as present; humans are time bound. Our perspective and mental abilities are limited. There is no contradiction between God’s sovereignty and mankind’s free will. It is a covenantal structure. This is another example of biblical truth given in dialectical tension (see Special Topic: Eastern Literature at 3:27. Biblical doctrines are usually presented from different perspectives. They often appear paradoxical. The truth is a balance between the seemingly opposite pairs. We must not remove the tension by picking one of the truths. We must not isolate any biblical truth into a theological system unrelated to a specific context.

It is also important to add that the goal of election is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10)! We were chosen to be “holy and blameless.” God chooses to change us so that

others may see the change and respond by faith to Him in Christ. Predestination is not a personal privilege but a covenantal responsibility!

▣ **“to become conformed to the image of His Son”** This is a major truth of this passage. This is the goal of Christianity (cf. 8:9; II Cor. 3:118; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10; 4:13; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). Holiness is God’s will for every believer. God’s election is to Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4), not a special standing. The image of God which was given to humanity in creation (cf. Gen. 1:26; 5:1,3; 9:6) is to be restored (cf. Col. 3:10). See note at 8:21 and Special Topic: Called at 1:6.

▣ **“that He might be the firstborn among many brethren”** In Psalm 89:27 “first-born” is a title for the Messiah. In the OT the first born son had preeminence and privilege. The term was used in Col. 1:15 to show Jesus’ preeminence in creation and in Col. 1:18 and Rev. 1:5 to show Jesus preeminence in resurrection. In this text believers are, through Him, brought into His preeminence!

This term does not refer to Jesus’ incarnation, but to Him as the head of a new race (cf. 5:12-21), the first in a series, the trail blazer of our faith, the channel of the Father’s blessing to the family of faith! See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRSTBORN

This word “firstborn” (*prōtotokos*) is used in the Bible in several distinct senses.

1. its OT background refers to the pre-imminence of the first-born son of the family (cf. Ps. 89:27; Luke 2:7; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 11:28)
2. its use in Col. 1:15 speaks of Jesus as the first of creation which is a possible OT allusion to Pro. 8:22-31, or God’s agent of creation (cf. John 1:3; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-16; Heb. 1:2)
3. its use in Col. 1:18; I Cor. 15:20 (and here) refers to Jesus as the firstborn from the dead
4. it is an OT title used of the Messiah (cf. Ps. 89:27; Heb. 1:6; 12:23). It was a title which combines several aspects of the primacy and centrality of Jesus. In this context #3 or #4 fits best.

8:30 “glorified” God is often described in the Bible by the term “glory.” The term came from a commercial root word that meant “heavy” and by implication, valuable, like gold. See Special Topic at 3:23. Theologically God is redeeming fallen mankind through a series of steps listed in vv. 29-30. The last step is “glorification.” This will be the believers’ complete salvation. It will occur on Resurrection Day when they are given their new spiritual bodies (cf. I Cor. 15:50-58) and are united fully with the Triune God and each other (cf. I Thess. 4:13-18; I John 3:2).

Often the process mentioned in vv. 29-30 is put into theological categories.

1. justification, v. 30 – freed from the penalty of sin (adoption, heirs, vv. 16-17)
2. sanctification (i.e., “conformed to the image of His Son”), v. 29 – freed from the power of sin (Christlike living)
3. glorification, v. 30 – freed from the presence of sin (i.e., heaven)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:31-39

³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? ³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or

distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶Just as it is written, “FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.” ³⁷But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

8:31 “What then shall we say to these things” This was a favorite phrase with Paul which reflects his diatribe form of presentation (cf. 3:5; 4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 9:14,30). This question relates to the previously given truths. It is uncertain how far back it refers. It could refer to 3:21-31 or 8:1 or 8:18. Because of the use of “therefore” in 8:1 and the context, 8:18 is probably a good guess.

▣ **“If”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Amazing, amidst all our struggles with sin, God is for us!

▣ **“who is against us”** The PRONOUN “who” is repeated in vv. 33,34,35. It refers to Satan (who is not mentioned by name until 16:20). This paragraph, from 31-39, is using the OT literary technique of the Prophets, a court case (cf. Micah 1, 6). YHWH takes His people to court for spiritual adultery. It is an allusion to Isa. 50:8-9.

Notice the legal terms: “against,” v. 31; “a charge,” v. 33; “justifies,” v. 33; “condemns,” v. 34; and “intercedes,” v. 34. God is the Judge. Christ is the defense lawyer. Satan is the prosecuting attorney (but he is silent). Angels fill the court room as observers (cf. I Cor. 4:9; Eph. 2:7; 3:10).

8:32 “He who did not spare His own Son” God the Father has given fallen mankind His best. He will not leave believers now nor give them less (cf. John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). How off target is the concept of a vindictive OT God and a loving Jesus! This ultimate gift is reflected in God’s statement to Abraham in Gen. 22:12, 16. The rabbis used this OT passage to support the doctrine of substitutionary atonement for Abraham’s seed.

▣ **“but delivered Him over for us all”** The word “all” in this text is significant. Jesus died for the sins of the world (cf. Luke 2:10-11; John 3:16; 4:42; 11:51; I Tim. 4:10; I John 2:2; 4:14). It reflects the Adam-Christ typology of 5:12-21. Jesus’ death solved the sin problem. Now it is a “believe and receive” problem.

▣ **“freely give us all things”** This VERB is from the Greek root for grace. “All things” refers to v. 17. See note at 3:24.

8:33-34 “charge...justifies...condemns...intercedes” These are all legal terms. Verses 31-39 are a court scene in heaven. This may be an allusion to Isaiah 50:8-9.

8:33 “God’s elect” Jesus is God’s elect man for all humans (Barth). The clearest and fullest passages on this truth in the NT are Eph. 1:3-4 and Rom. 9:14-26. The Father chose Jesus to choose all mankind. Jesus is God’s “yes” to fallen mankind’s “no!”

SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others' redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Ephesians 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths:

1. Predestination vs. human free will
2. Security of the believers vs. the need for perseverance
3. Original sin vs. volitional sin
4. Sinlessness (perfectionism) vs. sinning less
5. Initial instantaneous justification and sanctification vs. progressive sanctification
6. Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility
7. God's transcendence vs. God's immanence
8. God as ultimately unknowable vs. God as knowable in Scripture
9. The Kingdom of God as present vs. future consummation
10. Repentance as a gift of God vs. repentance as a necessary human covenantal response
11. Jesus as divine vs. Jesus as human
12. Jesus is equal to the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from humans. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

8:34 This verse lists several reasons why there is "no condemnation" (cf. v. 1).

1. He died
2. He was raised
3. He is at God's right hand
4. He intercedes for believers

Jesus' death paid the penalty for our sin (cf. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21). Jesus' resurrection shows the Father's acceptance of the Son's ministry and gives hope (the first fruit of those who are asleep) in the face of persecution and death. Jesus' glorification at the Father's right hand and intercession for believers gives them courage to fight the good fight of faith.

▣ **"right hand of God"** This is an anthropomorphic metaphor (see Special Topic at 1:18). God does not have a physical body. He is "spirit." This metaphor speaks of the place of power, authority and

preeminence. Paul does not use the expression often (cf. Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1). Paul may have been quoting an early Christian creed in v. 34 (cf. Phil. 2:6ff.; I Tim. 3:16).

▣ **“intercedes”** Jesus’ ministry continues. Jesus intercedes for us (cf. Heb. 4:4-16; 7:25; 9:24; I John 2:1) as does the Spirit (vv. 26-27). This is from the term *paraclete*, which is used of the Spirit in John 14:16 and of the Son in I John 2:1. This is another allusion to the suffering servant song (cf. Isa. 53:12).

8:35 “the love of Christ” This is either SUBJECTIVE or OBJECTIVE GENITIVE. This can either be (1) Christ’s love for believers or (2) believers love for Christ. Number 1 fits this context best (and II Cor. 5:14) because believers’ love for Christ comes and goes, but Christ’s love for us is sure and stable.

There is a Greek manuscript variant connected with this phrase.

1. One ancient Greek text has “the love of God” (cf. MS \aleph).
2. One ancient manuscript combines them together, “the love of God in Christ” (cf. MS B).
3. The UBS⁴ compilers give “the love of Christ” and “A” rating (certain). It appears in MSS C, D, F, G, and most Old Latin versions and the Vulgate and Peshitta.

▣ **“shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution”** Christians will have problems in this world, but neither these problems nor the evil powers can separate them from God. See Special Topic: Tribulations at 5:3.

8:36 This is a quote from Ps. 44:22. In this Psalm God is called on to give deliverance to His hurting people.

8:37

NASB “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer”
NKJV “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors”
NRSV “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors”
TEV “No, in all these things we have complete victory through him”
NJB “these are the trials through which we triumph”

This was an intensified form of the term “conquer.” Paul must have coined this term (*huper + nikaō*). This is a wonderful mixed metaphor, “conquering sheep.” Believers are conquerors through Christ (cf. John 16:33; I John 2:13-14; 4:4; 5:4). See Special Topic: Paul’s Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1:30.

▣ **“through Him who loved us”** This PRONOUN can refer to the Father or the Son.

8:38 “I am convinced” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, meaning “I have been and continue to be convinced.”

▣ **“angels”** The rabbis thought that the angels were jealous of God’s love and attention to mankind and, therefore, were hostile to them. The Gnostic false teachers asserted that salvation was only available by secret passwords through hostile angelic spheres or *eons* (cf. Colossians and Ephesians).

George Eldon Ladd has a good summary of the terms used by Paul for angels in his book *A Theology of the New Testament*:

“Paul refers not only to good and bad angels, to Satan and to demons; he uses another group of words to designate ranks of angelic spirits. The terminology is as follows:

‘Rule’ [*arche*], I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:10

‘Rulers’ [*archai*; RSV, “principalities”], Eph. 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:15; Rom. 8:38

‘Authority’ [*exousia*], I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:10

‘Authorities’ [*exousiai*; RSV, “authorities”], Eph. 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:15

‘Power’ [*dynamis*], I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21

‘Powers’ [*dynameis*], Rom. 8:38
 ‘Thrones’ [*thronoi*], Col. 1:16
 ‘Lordship’ [*kyriotes*; RSV, “dominion”], Eph. 1:21
 ‘Lordships’ [*kyriotetes*], Col. 1:16
 ‘World rulers of this darkness,’ Eph. 6:12
 ‘The spiritual (hosts) of evil in the heavenlies,’ Eph. 6:12
 ‘The authority of darkness,’ Col. 1:13
 ‘Every name that is named,’ Eph. 1:21
 ‘Heavenly, earthly, and subterranean beings,’ Phil. 2:10” (p. 401).

There is not direct biblical information about how the fallen angels of the OT relate to the demonic of the NT. Many assume they are identical. In Jewish apocalyptic literature, however, the demonic are the spirits of the Nephilim of Genesis 6, who were half angel and half human. Their bodies were destroyed in the flood, therefore, they seek embodiment! This is only speculation. The Bible does not answer all of our questions about origins. Its purpose is mankind’s redemption, not their curiosity!

■ **“principalities. . . powers”** This refers to (1) the evil angelic or demonic forces of this age (cf. Eph. 2:2; 6:12; I Cor. 15:24; Col. 1:16) or (2) possibly the impersonal structures of the fallen world (religion, government, education, medicine, etc.) that allows fallen mankind to be independent of God (cf. Hendrickus Berkhoff, *Principalities and Powers*). See note at 13:1.

SPECIAL TOPIC: *ARCHĒ*

The term “domain” is the Greek term *archē*, which means the “beginning” or “origin” of something.

1. beginning of the created order (cf. John 1:1; I John 1:1; Heb. 1:10)
2. the beginning of the gospel (cf. Mark 1:1; Phil. 4:15; II Thess. 2:13; Heb. 2:3)
3. first eyewitnesses (cf. Luke 1:2)
4. beginning signs (miracles, cf. John 2:11)
5. beginning principles (cf. Heb. 5:12)
6. beginning assurance based on gospel truths (cf. Heb. 3:14)
7. the beginning, Col. 1:18; Rev. 3:14

It came to be used of “rule” or “authority”

1. of human governing officials
 - a. Luke 12:11
 - b. Luke 20:20
 - c. Romans 13:3; Titus 3:1
2. of angelic authorities
 - a. Romans 8:38
 - b. I Cor. 15:24
 - c. Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12
 - d. Col. 1:16; 2:10,15
 - e. Jude v. 6

These false teachers despise all authority, earthly and heavenly. They are antinomian libertines. They put themselves and their desires first before God, angels, civil authorities, and church leaders.

8:39 “height, nor depth” These terms were used for the apogee and perigee of stars, that were believed to be gods who controlled human’s lives (astrology). Later they became technical terms in the heresy called Gnosticism for the *eons* or angelic levels between the holy god and the lesser god who formed sinful matter.

▣ **“any other created thing”** This is literally “creature of another kind” (*heteros*). The context demands that this is a further reference to angelic powers. The distinction between the Greek PREPOSITION *heteros*, another of a different kind, and *allos*, another of the same kind, were becoming obsolete in Koine Greek, but this context still shows some distinction.

▣ **“neither. . .nor. . .will be able to separate us from the love of God”** What a tremendous statement of assurance. This chapter starts with no condemnation and ends in no separation. No one can take the believer’s salvation. However, one must respond both initially (cf. 3:21-31) and continually (cf. chapters 4-8). The Spirit is the key, but there is a mandated conditional covenantal response. Repentance and faith are required (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21), as are obedience and perseverance!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is chapter 8 related to chapter 7?
2. If there is no condemnation, what does sin affect in the life of the believer?
3. Does the Spirit or Jesus indwell believers (v. 9)?
4. How was nature affected by man’s sin (vv. 19-22)? Will nature be a part of heaven (cf. Isa. 11:6-10)?
5. How does the Spirit pray for us (vv. 26-27)? Does this refer to “speaking in tongues?”
6. How can the Bible say all things work for good in such an evil world (v. 28)? Define “good” (v. 29).
7. Why is sanctification left out of the chain of theological events in vs. 30?
8. Why are vv. 31-39 said to be a court scene?
9. List the four things verse 34 asserts about Jesus.

ROMANS 9

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Election	Israel's Rejection of Christ	The Problem of Israel's Unbelief	God and His People	The Privileges of Israel
9:1-5	9:1-5	9:1-5	9:1-5	9:1-5
	Israel's Rejection and God's Purpose	God's Promise to Israel Has Not Failed		God Has Kept His Promise
9:6-13	9:6-13	9:6-13	9:6-9 9:10-13	9:6-13
	Israel's Rejection and God's Justice	God's Right to Choose		God is Not Unjust
9:14-18	9:14-29	9:14-18	9:14-18	9:14-18
God's Wrath and Mercy			God's Anger and Mercy	
9:19-29		9:19-26	9:19-21 9:22-29	9:19-21 9:22-24
		9:27-29		All Has Been Foretold in OT 9:25-29
Israel and the Gospel	Present Condition of Israel	True Righteousness is by Faith	Israel and the Gospel	
9:30-10:4	9:30-33	9:30-10:4	9:30-10:4	9:30-33

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CHAPTERS 9-11'S RELATIONSHIP TO CHAPTERS 1-8

- A. There have been two ways of understanding this literary unit's relationship to chapters 1-8.
1. It is a totally separate topic, a theological parenthesis
 - a. There is a drastic contrast and lack of logical connection between 8:39 and 9:1.
 - b. It is directly related to the historical tension in the church at Rome between believing Jews and believing Gentiles. It was possibly related to the growing Gentile leadership of the Church.
 - c. There was misunderstanding about Paul's preaching concerning Israel (and the Law) and his apostleship to the Gentiles (offer of free grace), therefore, he deals with this topic in this section.
 2. It is the climax and logical conclusion of Paul's presentation of the gospel.
 - a. Paul concludes chapter 8 with the promise of "no separation from the love of God." What about the unbelief of the covenant people?
 - b. Romans 9-11 answers the paradox of the gospel concerning Israel's unbelief!
 - c. Paul has been addressing this very issue all through the letter (cf. 1:3,16; 3:21,31 and 4:1ff).
 - d. Paul claims that God is true to His Word. What about His OT word to Israel? Are all those promises null and void?
- B. There are several possible ways to outline this literary unit
1. by Paul's use of a supposed objector (diatribe)
 - a. 9:6
 - b. 9:14
 - c. 9:19
 - d. 9:30
 - e. 11:1
 - f. 11:11
 2. Romans 9-11 forms a literary unit (chapter and verse divisions are not inspired and were added later). It must be interpreted together as a whole. However, there are at least three major subject divisions.
 - a. 9:1-29 (focusing on God's sovereignty)
 - b. 9:30-10:21 (focusing on human responsibility)
 - c. 11:1-32 (God's inclusive, eternal, redemptive purpose)
 3. by main topics: a good outline of this section of Romans is found in the paragraph divisions of the NKJV by Thomas Nelson Publishers
 - a. Israel's rejection of Christ, 9:1-5
 - b. Israel's rejection of God's purpose, 9:6-13
 - c. Israel's rejection of God's justice, 9:14-29
 - d. Present condition of Israel, 9:30-33
 - e. Israel and the gospel, 10:1-13
 - f. Israel rejection of the gospel, 10:14-21
 - g. Israel's rejection not total, 11:1-10
 - h. Israel's rejection not final, 11:11-36
- C. This section is as much a cry from the heart as a presentation from the mind (logical outline). Its passion reminds one of God's heart breaking over rebellious Israel in Hosea 11:1-4,8-9.
- In many ways the pain and goodness of the Law in chapter 7 are paralleled in chapters 9-10. In both cases Paul's heart was breaking over the irony of a law from God that brought death instead of life!

- D. Paul's use of over 25 OT quotes in chapters 9-11 shows his desire to illustrate the paradox of Israel from OT sources, as he did in chapter 4, not just current experience. The majority of Abraham's physical descendants had rejected God, even in the past (cf. Acts 7; Nehemiah 9).
- E. This text, like Eph. 1:3-14, deals with the eternal purposes of God for the redemption of all humanity. At first it seems to describe God choosing some individuals and rejecting other individuals (supralapsarian Calvinism), however, I think the focus is not on individuals, but on God's eternal plan of redemption (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; and 13:29, see Special Topic at 8:28).

The Jerome Biblical Commentary, vol. 2, "The New Testament," edited by Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Raymond E. Brown, says:

"It is important to realize from the outset that Paul's perspective is corporate; he is not discussing the responsibility of individuals. If he seems to bring up the question of divine predestination, this has nothing to do with the predestination of individuals to glory" (p. 318).

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO CHAPTER 9

- A. What a drastic change of attitude occurs between chapter 8 and chapter 9.
- B. This literary unit (9-11) deals theologically with
 1. the basis of salvation
 2. the electing purpose of God
 3. the faithlessness of unbelieving Israel versus the faithfulness of YHWH
 4. the inclusion of all humanity in Jesus' redemption
- C. Chapter 9 is one of the strongest NT passages on God's sovereignty (i.e., the other being, Eph. 1:3-14) while chapter 10 states human's free will clearly and repeatedly (cf. "everyone" v. 4; "whosoever" vv. 11,13; "all" v. 12 [twice]). Paul never tries to reconcile this theological tension. They are both true! Most Bible doctrines are presented in paradoxical or dialectical pairs. Most systems of theology are logical, but proof-text only one aspect of biblical truth. Both Augustinianism and Calvinism versus semi-Pelagianism and Arminianism have elements of truth and error. Biblical tension between doctrines is preferable to a proof-texted, dogmatic, rational, theological system that forces the Bible onto a preconceived interpretive grid! See Special Topic: Eastern Literature at 3:27.
- D. 9:30-33 is a summary of chapter 9 and the theme of chapter 10.
- E. Notice how much Paul uses OT texts to establish his argument. This presupposes a Jewish readership in Rome.
 1. v. 7 – Gen. 21:12
 2. v. 9 – Gen. 18:10,14
 3. v. 12 – Gen. 25:32
 4. v. 13 – Mal. 1:2-3
 5. v. 15 – Exod. 33:19
 6. v. 17 – Exod. 9:16
 7. v. 25 – Hosea 2:23
 8. v. 26 – Hosea 1:10
 9. v. 27 – Isa. 10:22

- 10. v. 28 – Isa. 10:23
- 11. v. 29 – Isa. 1:9
- 12. v. 33 – Isa. 28:16 and 8:14

There are many more OT quotes in chapters 19 and 11!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-5

¹I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, ²that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were accursed, *separated* from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, ⁴who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises, ⁵whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

9:1-2 Verses 1 and 2 form one sentence in Greek. Paul is giving several reasons they (the church at Rome) could know that he was telling the truth.

- 1. his union with Christ, v. 1
- 2. his Spirit-led conscience, v. 1
- 3. his deep feelings for Israel, v. 2

9:1 “I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying” Paul often made this kind of statement of his veracity (cf. II Cor. 11:10; Gal. 1:20; I Tim. 2:7) or a similar one about God as his witness (cf. Rom. 1:9; II Cor. 1:23; 11:31; Phil. 1:8; I Thess. 2:5,10). It was his way of asserting the truthfulness of his teachings and preaching. The experience on the road to Damascus changed everything!

▣ **“my conscience”** This referred to the believer’s God-given, Spirit-led moral sense. In one sense this is a key source of authority for believers. It is God’s word, understood and applied by the Spirit of God to our minds (cf. I Tim. 1:5,19). The problem arises when believers—and for that matter, unbelievers—continue to reject the Word and the Spirit; it then becomes easier to rationalize one’s sin (cf. I Tim. 4:2). Our consciences can be culturally and experientially conditioned.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONSCIENCE

Paul uses the term “conscience” often in the Corinthian letters (cf. 4:4; 8:7, 10, 12; 10:25, 27, 28, 29; II Cor. 1:12; 4:2; 5:11). It refers to that moral inner sense of what is appropriate or inappropriate (cf. Acts 23:1). The conscience can be affected by our past lives, our poor choices, or by the Spirit of God. It is not a flawless guide, but it does determine the boundaries of individual faith. Therefore, to violate our conscience, even if it is in error or weak, is a major faith problem.

The believer’s conscience needs to be more and more formed by the Word of God and the Spirit of God (cf. I Tim. 3:9). God will judge believers by the light they have (i.e., weak or strong), but all of us need to be open to the Bible and the Spirit for more light and to be growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. See fuller note on “conscience” at II Cor. 10:25. See Special Topic: Weakness.

- ▣ NASB, NKJV “bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit”
- NRSV “confirms it by the Holy Spirit”
- TEV “ruled by the Holy Spirit”
- NJB “in union with the Holy Spirit assumes me”

Paul believed he had a special call and mandate from Christ (cf. Acts 9:1-22; Gal. 1:1).

The VERBAL (PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. 2:15) is a compound with *sun* (so common in Paul). He was convinced of his new understanding based on

1. the revelation of Christ
 - a. road to Damascus
 - b. taught in Arabia (Nabeteian)
2. internal witness of the Spirit

He was an Apostle and spoke with divine authority (cf. I Cor. 7:25,40). He shared God's grief over the unbelief and inalcitrance of national Israel (cf. v. 2). They had so many advantages (cf. vv. 4-5).

9:3

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "For I could wish . . ."

TEV "For their sake I could wish"

NJB "I would be willing . . ."

Paul felt so deeply for his people, Israel, that if his separation could effect their inclusion, he would be willing, v. 3. This verse has such a strong, emphatic grammatical construction (IMPERFECT MIDDLE INDICATIVE with both *autos* and *egō*, and a PRESENT INFINITIVE). The intensity and burden of this prayer is very similar to Moses' intercessory prayer for sinful Israel in Exod. 32:30-35. This is best understood as a statement of desire, not fact. It is similar to a use of the IMPERFECT TENSE in Gal. 4:20.

See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER

I. Introduction

- A. Prayer is significant because of Jesus' example
 1. personal prayer, Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:29; 22:29-46
 2. cleansing of the Temple, Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46
 3. Model Prayer, Matt. 6:5-13; Luke 11:2-4
- B. Prayer is putting into tangible action our belief in a personal, caring God who is present, willing, and able to act on our behalf and others, through our prayers.
- C. God has personally limited Himself to act on the prayers of His children in many areas (cf. James 4:2)
- D. The major purpose of prayer is our fellowship and time with the Triune God.
- E. The scope of prayer is anything or anyone that concerns believers. We may pray once, believing, or over and over again as the thought or concern returns.
- F. Prayer can involve several elements
 1. praise and adoration of the Triune God
 2. thanksgiving to God for His presence, fellowship, and provisions
 3. confession of our sinfulness, both past and present
 4. petition of our sensed needs or desires
 5. intercession where we hold the needs of others before the Father
- G. Intercessory prayer is a mystery. God loves those for whom we pray much more than we do, yet our prayers often effect a change, response, or need, not only in ourselves, but in them.

II. Biblical Material

A. Old Testament

1. Some examples of intercessory prayer:
 - a. Abraham pleading for Sodom, Gen. 18:22ff
 - b. Moses' prayers for Israel
 - (1) Exodus 5:22-23
 - (2) Exodus 32:31ff
 - (3) Deuteronomy 5:5
 - (4) Deuteronomy 9:18,25ff
 - c. Samuel prays for Israel:
 - (1) I Samuel 7:5-6,8-9
 - (2) I Samuel 12:16-23
 - (3) I Samuel 15:11
 - d. David for his child, II Samuel 12:16-18
2. God is looking for intercessors, Isaiah 59:16
3. Known, unconfessed sin or an unrepentant attitude affects our prayers
 - a. Psalm 66:18
 - b. Proverbs 28:9
 - c. Isaiah 59:1-2; 64:7

B. New Testament

1. The Son and Spirit's intercessory ministry
 - a. Jesus
 - (1) Romans 8:34
 - (2) Hebrews 7:25
 - (3) I John 2:1
 - b. Holy Spirit, Romans 8:26-27
2. Paul's intercessory ministry
 - a. Prays for the Jews
 - (1) Romans 9:1ff
 - (2) Romans 10:1
 - b. Prays for the churches
 - (1) Romans 1:9
 - (2) Ephesians 1:16
 - (3) Philippians 1:3-4,9
 - (4) Colossians 1:3,9
 - (5) I Thessalonians 1:2-3
 - (6) II Thessalonians 1:11
 - (7) II Timothy 1:3
 - (8) Philemon, v. 4
 - c. Paul asked the churches to pray for him
 - (1) Romans 15:30

- (2) II Corinthians 1:11
- (3) Ephesians 6:19
- (4) Colossians 4:3
- (5) I Thessalonians 5:25
- (6) II Thessalonians 3:1
- 3. The church's intercessory ministry
 - a. Pray for one another
 - (1) Ephesians 6:18
 - (2) I Timothy 2:1
 - (3) James 5:16
 - b. Prayer requested for special groups
 - (1) our enemies, Matt. 5:44
 - (2) Christian workers, Hebrews 13:18
 - (3) rulers, I Timothy 2:2
 - (4) the sick, James 5:13-16
 - (5) backsliders, I John 5:16

III. Conditions for answered prayer

A. Our relationship to Christ and the Spirit

- 1. Abide in Him, John 15:7
- 2. In His name, John 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23-24
- 3. In the Spirit, Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20
- 4. According to God's will, Matthew 6:10; I John 3:22; 5:14-15

B. Motives

- 1. Not wavering, Matthew 21:22; James 1:6-7
- 2. Humility and repentance, Luke 18:9-14
- 3. Asking amiss, James 4:3
- 4. Selfishness, James 4:2-3

C. Other aspects

- 1. Perseverance
 - a. Luke 18:1-8
 - b. Colossians 4:2
- 2. Kept on asking
 - a. Matthew 7:7-8
 - b. Luke 11:5-13
 - c. James 1:5
- 3. Discord at home, I Peter 3:7
- 4. Free from known sin
 - a. Psalm 66:18
 - b. Proverbs 28:9
 - c. Isaiah 59:1-2
 - d. Isaiah 64:7

IV. Theological Conclusion

- A. What a privilege. What an opportunity. What a duty and responsibility
- B. Jesus is our example. The Spirit is our guide. The Father is eagerly waiting.
- C. It could change you, your family, your friends, and the world.



NASB “were accursed, *separated from Christ*”

NKJV “were accursed from Christ”

NRSV “were accursed and cut off from Christ”

TEV “were under God’s curse and separated from Christ”

NJB “willingly be condemned and cut off from Christ”

The basic etymology of “holy” is to set apart to God for His use. This same concept relates to these terms for “curse” (*anathema*, cf. I Cor. 12:3; 16:22; Gal. 1:8,9). Something or someone is set apart to God. It can be a positive experience (cf. Lev. 27:28; Luke 21:5) or a negative experience (cf. Josh. 6-7; Rom. 9:3), depending on the context.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CURSE (*ANATHEMA*)

There are several words in Hebrew for “curse.” *Herem* (BDB 356) was used of something given to God (cf. LXX as *anathema* (BAGD 54), Lev. 27:28), usually for destruction (cf. Deut. 7:26; Josh. 6:17-18; 17:12). It was a term used in the concept of “holy war.” God said to destroy the Canaanites and Jericho was the first opportunity, the “first fruits.”

In the NT *anathema* and its related forms were used in several different senses:

1. as a gift or offering to God (cf. Luke 21:5)
2. as a death oath (cf. Acts 23:14)
3. to curse and swear (cf. Mark 14:71)
4. a curse formula related to Jesus (cf. I Cor. 12:3)
5. a giving of someone or something to the judgment or destruction of God (cf. Rom. 9:3; I Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:8-9).

▣ “my kinsmen according to the flesh” See Special Topic at 1:3.

9:4-5 This series of NOUN PHRASES spells out in graphic detail the privileges of Israel. Their unbelief was all the more culpable in light of these advantages. To whom much is given, much is required (cf. Luke 12:48)!

9:4 “Israelites” This was the OT covenant name for Abraham’s seed. After a pivotal encounter with God Jacob’s name was changed to Israel (cf. Gen. 32:28). It became the collective title for the Jewish nation. Its etymology may be “may *El* (God) persevere” and by implication, not Jacob’s trickery.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISRAEL (the name)

- I. The Name's meaning is uncertain (BDB 975).
 - A. *El* Persists
 - B. Let *El* Persist (JUSSIVE)
 - C. *El* Preserves
 - D. Let *El* Contend
 - E. *El* Strives
 - F. He who strives with God (Gen. 32:28)
- II. Usages in the OT
 - A. Jacob's name (supplanter, heel grabber, BDB 784, cf. Gen. 25:26) is changed after wrestling with the spiritual personage at the river Jabbok (cf. Gen. 32:22-32; Exod. 32:13). Often the meanings of Hebrew names are sound plays, not etymologies (cf. 32:28). Israel becomes his name (e.g., Gen. 35:10).
 - B. It came to be used as a collective name for all of his twelve sons (e.g., Gen. 32:32; 49:16; Exod. 1:7; 4:22; 28:11; Deut. 3:18; 10:6).
 - C. It came to designate the nation formed by the twelve tribes before the exodus (cf. Gen. 47:27; Exod. 4:22; 5:2) and after (cf. Deut. 1:1; 18:6; 33:10).
 - D. After the united monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon the tribes split under Rehoboam (cf. I Kings 12).
 1. the distinction starts even before the official split (e.g., II Sam. 3:10; 5:5; 20:1; 24:9; I Kgs. 1:35; 4:20)
 2. designates the northern tribes until the fall of Samaria to Assyria in 722 B.C. (cf. II Kings 17).
 - E. Used of Judah in a few places (e.g., Isaiah 1; Micah 1:15-16).
 - F. After the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles it became again the collective name for all of Jacob's descendants (e.g., Isa. 17:7,9; Jer. 2:4; 50:17,19).
 - G. Used of laity in contradistinction from priests (cf. I Chr. 9:2; Ezra 10:25; Neh. 11:3).

▣ **“to whom belongs the adoption as sons”** In the OT the PLURAL of “sons” usually referred to the angels (cf. Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Dan. 3:25; Ps. 29:1; 89:6-7), while the SINGULAR referred to

1. the Israeli King (cf. II Sam. 7:14)
2. the nation (cf. Exod. 4:22,23; Deut. 14:1; Hosea 11:1)
3. the Messiah (cf. Ps. 2:7)
4. it can refer to humans (cf. Deut. 32:5; Ps. 73:15; Ezek. 2:1; Hos. 1:10. Genesis 6:2 is ambiguous; it could be either). In the NT it refers to one who belongs to the family of God.

Paul's major metaphor for salvation was “adoption” (cf. Rom. 8:15,23; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5), while Peter and John's was “born again.” They are both familial metaphors. It is not a Jewish, but Roman, metaphor. Adoption was a very expensive and time consuming legal procedure under Roman law. Once adopted the person was considered a new person who could not be legally disowned or killed by their adoptive father.

▣ **“the glory”** The Hebrew root meant “to be heavy” which was a metaphor for that which was valuable. Here it refers to

1. God's revealing Himself on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exod. 19:18-19)
2. the *Shekinah* cloud of glory which led the Israelites during the Wilderness Wandering Period (cf. Exod. 40:34-38)

YHWH uniquely revealed Himself to Israel. YHWH's presence was referred to as His glory (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:10-11; Ezek. 1:28). See Special Topic at 3:23.

▣ **“the covenants”** In the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁴⁶, B, F, and G the SINGULAR “covenant” is used. However, the PLURAL is in MSS \aleph , C, and some Old Latin, Vulgate, and Coptic versions. The UBS⁴ gives the PLURAL a “B” rating (almost certain). However, the PLURAL is never used in the OT. There are several specific covenants in the OT: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. Since the giving of the Law is mentioned next, this probably refers to the Abrahamic Covenant, which was the one Paul saw as foundational (cf. 4:1-25; Gal. 3:16-17) and was repeated several times (i.e., Genesis 12, 15, 17) and to each of the Patriarchs.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

The OT term *berith* (BDB 136), covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God's sovereignty and human free-will are clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God's character and actions.

1. creation itself (cf. Genesis 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Genesis 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Genesis 15)
4. the preservation and promise to Noah (cf. Genesis 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response.

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28)

This same tension involving God's relationship to humanity is addressed in the “new covenant.” The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezekiel 18 with Ezek. 36:27-37 (YHWH's action). Is the covenant based on God's gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue of the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship with YHWH lost in Genesis 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God's character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God's law becomes an internal desire instead of an external law code. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God's reflected image. The problem was not God's covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Romans 7; Galatians 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. However, eternal life has observable characteristics! This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

▣ **“the giving of the Law and the temple service”** This would refer to

1. Moses’ receiving the Law on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exodus 19-20)
2. the Tabernacle of the Wilderness Wandering Period (cf. Exodus 25-40 and Leviticus)

▣ **“the promises”** God has revealed His future plans (cf. 1:2; Acts 13:32; Titus 1:2; Heb. 1:1) through the OT.

Since “the covenants” are mentioned earlier, “the promises” probably refers to the Messiah (cf. v. 5, e.g., Gen. 3:15; 49:10; Deut. 18:15,18-19; II Sam. 7; Ps. 16:10; 118:22; Isa. 7:14; 9:6; 11:1-5; Dan. 7:13,27; Micah 5:2-5a; Zech. 2:6-13; 6:12-13; 9:9; 11:12).

These promises (covenants) are both unconditional and conditional. They were unconditional as far as God’s performance (cf. Gen. 15:12-21), but conditional on mankind’s faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6 and Romans 4). Only Israel had God’s self revelation before the coming of Christ (but with exceptions such as Job, Jethro).

9:5 “the fathers” This referred to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Patriarchs of Genesis 12-50 (cf. Rom. 11:28; Deut. 7:8; 10:15).

▣ **“from whom is the Christ according to the flesh”** This referred to the physical lineage of the Messiah (cf. 1:3, see Special Topic: Messiah at 1:4), the Anointed One, God’s special chosen servant who would accomplish God’s promises and plans, (cf. 10:6).

The term “Christ” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew “Anointed One.” In the OT three groups of leaders were anointed with special holy oil.

1. kings of Israel
2. high priests of Israel
3. prophets of Israel

It was a symbol of God’s choosing and equipping them for His service. Jesus fulfilled all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3). He is God’s full revelation because He was God incarnate (cf. Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:2-5a; Col. 1:13-20).

For “flesh” see Special Topic at 1:3.

▣

NASB “the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever”

NKJV “Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God”

NRSV “comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever”

TEV “and Christ as a human being, belongs to their race. May God, who rules over all, be praised forever”

NJB “came Christ who is above all, God for ever blessed”

Grammatically this could be a doxology to the Father (TEV, following Jewish tradition), but the context favors Paul’s affirmation of Jesus’ deity (it does not follow the pattern of Jewish doxologies to YHWH in the LXX; see J. Murray, II, pp. 245-248). Paul does not use *Theos* for Jesus often, but he does use it (cf. Acts 20:28; II Thess. 1:12; Titus 2:13; Phil. 2:6). All the early church Fathers interpreted this text as referring to Jesus. Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary On the Greek New Testament*, pp. 520-522, shows that the different options are related to where the punctuation marks are places. The ancient uncial manuscripts had no

1. capitalization
2. punctuation marks
3. paragraph divisions
4. not even spaces between words

▣ **“who is over all”** This also could be a descriptive phrase for God the Father or Jesus the Son. It does reflect Jesus’ statement of Matt. 28:19 and Paul’s in Col. 1:15-20. This majestic phrase showed the height of Israel’s folly in rejecting Jesus of Nazareth.

▣ **“forever”** This is literally the Greek idiomatic phrase “unto the ages” (cf. Luke 1:33; Rom. 1:25; 11:36; Gal. 1:5; I Tim. 1:17). This is one of several related phrases (1) “unto the age” (cf. Matt. 21:19 [Mark 11:14]; Luke 1:55; John 6:5,58; 8:35; 12:34; 13:8; 14:16; II Cor. 9:9) or (2) “of the age of the ages” (cf. Eph. 3:21). There seems to be no distinction between these idioms for “forever.” The term “ages” may be PLURAL in a figurative sense of the rabbinical grammatical construction called “the plural of majesty” or it may refer to the concept of several “ages” in the Jewish sense of “age of innocence,” “age of wickedness,” “age to come,” or “age of righteousness.”

▣ **“Amen”** See Special Topic at 1:25.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:6-13

⁶But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; ⁷nor are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants, but: “THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED.” ⁸That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. ⁹For this is the word of promise: “AT THIS TIME I WILL COME, AND SARAH SHALL HAVE A SON.” ¹⁰And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived *twins* by one man, our father Isaac; ¹¹for though *the twins* were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to *His* choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, ¹²it was said to her, “THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER.” ¹³Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.”

9:6 “the word of God” In this context this phrase refers to the OT covenantal promises. God’s promises are sure (cf. Num. 23:19; Joshua 21:45; 23:14; II Kgs. 10:10; Isa. 40:8; 55:11; 59:21).

▣

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB “has failed”

NKJV “has taken no effect”

This term (*ekpiptō*) was used in the Septuagint several times for something (cf. Isa. 6:13) or someone (cf. Isa. 14:12) falling. Here it is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which denotes a state of being with lasting results (but it is negated). See note above for the surety of God’s word.

▣

NASB “For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel”

NKJV “For they are not all Israel who are of Israel”

NRSV “For not all Israelites truly belong to Israel”

TEV “For not all the people of Israel are the people of God”

NJB “Not all those who descend from Israel are Israel”

The meaning of this paradoxical statement revolves around the different biblical meanings of the term “Israel.”

1. Israel, meaning Jacob’s descendants (cf. Gen. 32:22-32)
2. Israel, meaning the elect people of God (cf. TEV)
3. spiritual Israel, Israel meaning the church, (cf. Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:8,9; Rev. 1:6) versus natural Israel (cf. vv. 3-6)

Only some of Abraham's children were the children of promise (cf. v. 7). Even the Jews were never right with God based solely on their lineage (cf. v. 7), but on their faith (cf. 2:28-29; 4:1ff.; John 8:31-59; Gal. 3:7-9; 4:23). It was the believing remnant (see Special Topic at 9:27-28) who received God's promises and walked in them by faith (cf. 9:27; 11:5).

Verse 6 starts a series of supposed objections (cf. 9:14,19,30; 11:1). This continues Paul's diatribe format. It conveys truth by means of a supposed objector (i.e., Mal. 1:2,6,7 [twice],12,13; 2:14,17 [twice]; 3:7,13,14).

9:7 The second half of this verse is a quote from Gen. 21:12d. Not all of Abraham's children were children of God's covenant promise (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-11; 17:1-21; 18:1-15; Gal. 4:23). This shows the distinction between Ishmael and Isaac in vv. 8-9, and Jacob and Esau in vv. 10-11.

9:8 Here Paul is using the term "flesh" to refer to national descent (cf. 1:3; 4:1; 9:3,5, see Special Topic at 1:3). He is contrasting the natural children of Abraham (the Jews of 9:3) with the spiritual children (children of the promise) of Abraham (those who will trust God's promised Messiah by faith, cf. 2:28-29). This is not the same contrast as 8:4-11, fallen mankind versus redeemed mankind.

9:9 This is a quote from Genesis 18:10,14. The promised child ("the seed") will come from Sarah at God's initiative. This eventually will culminate in the birth of the Messiah. Isaac was a special fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3 thirteen years earlier.

9:10 The wives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were barren; they could not conceive. Their inability to have a child was one of God's ways to show that He was in control of the covenant promises, the Messianic line.

The other way was that the true Messianic line never proceeds through the oldest son of the Patriarchs (which was culturally expected). The key is God's choice (cf. vv. 11-12).

9:11-12 Verses 11-12 are one sentence in Greek. This account is taken from Gen. 25:19-34. This example is used to prove that God's choice (cf. v. 16), not (1) human lineage or (2) human merit or achievements (cf. v. 16). This is the new mechanism of the gospel, the new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-36). However, it must be remembered that God's choice was not meant to exclude, but to include! The Messiah will come from a select seed, but He will come for all (who exercise faith, cf. 2:28-29; 4:3,22-25; chapter 10).

9:11 "purpose" This is the compound term *pro* plus *tithēmi*, which has several senses.

1. in Rom. 3:25
 - a. set forth publicly
 - b. propitiatory gift
2. to plan beforehand
 - a. of Paul, Rom. 1:13
 - b. of God, Eph. 1:9

The NOUN form (*prothesis*), used in this text, means "to set before"

1. used of the shewbread in the temple, Matt. 12:4; Mark 2:26; Luke 6:4
2. used of a predetermined, redemptive purpose of God, Rom. 8:28; 9:11; Eph. 1:5,11; 3:10; II Tim. 1:9; 3:10

Paul uses several compound terms with the PREPOSITION *pro* (before) in chapters 8 and 9 of Romans and Ephesians 1 (they show God's planned activity).

1. *proginōskō* (foreknew), Rom. 8:29
2. *proorizō* (design beforehand), Rom. 8:29 (Eph. 1:5,11), 30 (Eph. 1:9)

3. *prothesis* (predetermined purpose), Rom. 9:11
4. *proetoimazō* (preface beforehand), Rom. 9:23
5. *prolegō* (previously said), Rom. 9:29
6. *proelpizō* (hoped beforehand), Eph. 1:12)

9:12 This is a quote from the prophecy of Gen. 25:23 related to Esau and Jacob. This shows that Rebekah and Jacob acted out of prophecy, not personal gain, in tricking Isaac in regard to the blessing!

9:13 “but Esau I hated” This is a quote from Mal. 1:2-3. “Hate” is a Hebrew idiom of comparison. It sounds harsh in English, but compare Gen. 29:31-33; Deut. 21:15; Matt. 10:37-38; Luke 14:26; and John 12:25. The anthropomorphic terms “love” and “hate” relate not to God’s emotions towards these individuals, but His commitment to a Messianic line and promise. Jacob was the son of promise based on the prophecy of Gen. 25:23. Esau, in Mal. 1:2-3, referred to the nation of Edom (the descendant of Esau).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE)

I. This type of language is very common in the OT (some examples)

A. Physical body parts

1. eyes – Gen. 1:4,31; 6:8; Exod. 33:17; Num. 14:14; Deut. 11:12; Zech. 4:10
2. hands – Exod. 15:17; Num. 11:23; Deut. 2:15
3. arm – Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Num. 11:23; Deut. 4:34; 5:15
4. ears – Num. 11:18; I Sam. 8:21; II Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 5:1; 10:17; 18:6
5. face – Exod. 32:30; 33:11; Num. 6:25; Deut. 34:10; Ps. 114:7
6. finger – Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3
7. voice – Gen. 3:8,10; Exod. 15:26; 19:19; Deut. 26:17; 27:10
8. feet – Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 43:7
9. human form – Exod. 24:9-11; Ps. 47; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26
10. the angel of the Lord – Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:4,13-21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22

B. Physical actions

1. speaking as the mechanism of creation – Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26
2. walking (i.e., sound of) in Eden – Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Hab. 3:15
3. closing the door of Noah’s ark – Gen. 7:16
4. smelling sacrifices – Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31; Amos 5:21
5. coming down – Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20
6. burying Moses – Deut. 34:6

C. Human emotions (some examples)

1. regret/repent – Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:29,35; Amos 7:3,6
2. anger – Exod. 4:14; 15:7; Num. 11:10; 12:9; 22:22; 25:3,4; 32:10,13,14; Deut. 6:5; 7:4; 29:20
3. jealousy – Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16,21; Josh. 24:19
4. loathe/abhor – Lev. 20:23; 26:30; Deut. 32:19

D. Family terms (some examples)

1. Father

- a. of Israel – Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5
- b. of the king – II Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:7
- c. metaphors of fatherly action – Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 32:1; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Jer. 3:4,22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Mal. 3:17

2. Parent – Hosea 11:1-4

3. Mother – Ps. 27:10 (analogy to nursing mother); Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13

4. Young faithful lover – Hosea 1-3

II. Reasons for the use of this type of language

- A. It is a necessity for God to reveal Himself to human beings. The very pervasive concept of God as male is an anthropomorphism because God is spirit!
- B. God takes the most meaningful aspects of human life and uses them to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (father, mother, parent, lover)
- C. Though necessary, God does not want to be limited to any physical form (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5)
- D. The ultimate anthropomorphism is the incarnation of Jesus! God became physical, touchable (cf. I John 1:1-3). The message of God became the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:14-18

¹⁴What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! ¹⁵For He says to Moses, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.” ¹⁶So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.” ¹⁸So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

9:14 “What shall we say then” Paul often used this diatribe form (cf. 3:5; 4:1; 6:1; 7:7; 8:31; 9:14,19,30).

▣ **“There is no injustice with God, is there?”** The grammar expects a “no” answer. How can God hold humans responsible if God’s sovereignty is the deciding factor (cf. v. 19)? This is the mystery of election. The key emphasis in this context is that God is free to do what He will with humanity (rebellious mankind), however, God’s sovereignty is expressed in mercy (see note at v. 15), not raw power.

It must also be stated that God’s sovereign choices are not based on foreknowledge of human’s future choices and actions. If this were true then ultimately individual’s choices and actions and merits would be the basis of God’s choices (cf. v. 16; I Pet. 1:2). Behind this is the traditional Jewish view of prosperity to the righteous (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28; Job and Psalm 73). But, God chooses to bless the unworthy through faith (not performance, cf. 5:8). God knows all things but He has chosen to limit His choices (1) in mercy and (2) in promise. There is a necessary human response, but it follows and ultimately confirms God’s life changing elective choice.

▣ **“May it never be”** This is a rare OPTATIVE FORM that was often used by Paul for an emphatic negation usually to his diatribe objector’s questions (cf. 3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 11:1,11 also I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). It is possibly a Hebrew idiom.

9:15 This is a quote from Exod. 33:19. God is free to act according to His own redemptive purposes. Even Moses did not merit God’s blessing (cf. Exod. 33:20). He was a murdered (cf. Exod. 2:11-15). The key is that His choices are in mercy (cf. vv. 16,18-23; 11:30,31,32).

9:15-16 “mercy” This Greek word (*eleos*, cf. vv. 15,16,18,23; 11:30,31,32) is used in the Septuagint (LXX) to translate the special Hebrew term *hesed* (remember the writers of the NT were Hebrew thinkers writing in street Greek), which meant “steadfast, covenant loyalty.” God’s mercy and election are plural, corporate, (Jews [Isaac], not Arabs [Ishmael]; Israel [Jacob], not Edom [Esau], but believing Jews and believing Gentiles, cf. v. 24) as well as individuals. This truth is one of the keys to unlocking the mystery of the doctrine of predestination (universal redemption). The other key in the context of chapters 9-11 is God’s unchanging character—mercy (cf. 9:15,16,18,23; 11:30,31,32), and not human performance. Mercy through selection will eventually reach all who believe in Christ. The one opens the door of faith to all (cf. 5:18-19).

SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (*HESED*)

This term has a wide semantic field. The BDB characterizes it this way (338-339).

A. Used in connection to human beings

1. kindness to fellow men (e.g., I Sam. 20:14; II Chr. 24:22)
2. kindness toward the poor and needy (e.g., Micah 6:8)
3. affection (cf. Jer. 2:2; Hos. 6:4)
4. appearance (cf. Isa. 40:6)

B. Used in connection to God

1. covenant loyalty and love
 - a. “in redemption from enemies and troubles” (e.g., Jer. 31:3; Ezra 27:28; 9:9)
 - b. “in preservation of life from death” (e.g., Job 10:12; Ps. 86:13)
 - c. “in quickening of spiritual life” (e.g., Ps. 119:41,76,88,124,149,150)
 - d. “in redemption from sin” (cf. Ps. 25:7; 51:3)
 - e. “in keeping the covenants” (e.g., II Chr. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32)
2. describes a divine attribute (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Micah 7:20)
3. kindness of God
 - a. “abundant” (e.g., Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8)
 - b. “great in extent” (e.g., Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9)
 - c. “everlasting” (e.g., I Chr. 16:34,41; II Chr. 5:13; 7:3,6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11)
4. deeds of kindness (e.g., II Chr. 6:42; Ps. 89:2; Isa. 55:3; 63:7; Lam. 3:22)

9:17-18 Verse 17 is a powerful universal quote from Exod. 9:16; verse 18 is the conclusion drawn from the quote. Pharaoh is said to have hardened his own heart in Exod. 8:15,19,32; 9:34. God is said to have hardened his heart in Exod. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:20,27; 11:10. This example is used to show God’s

sovereignty (cf. v. 18). Pharaoh is responsible for his choices. God uses Pharaoh's arrogant, stubborn personality to accomplish His will for Israel (cf. v. 18).

Also notice the purpose of God's actions with Pharaoh were redemptive in purpose; and inclusive in scope. They were intended:

1. to show God's power (versus the Egyptian nature and animal gods, as Genesis 1 does to the Babylonian astral deities)
2. to reveal God to Egypt and, by implication, the whole earth (cf. v. 17)

Western (American) thought magnifies the individual, but eastern thought focuses on the need of the corporate whole. God used Pharaoh to reveal Himself to a needy world. He will do the same with unbelieving Israel (cf. chapter 11). In this context the rights of the one diminishes in light of the needs of the whole. Remember, also the corporate OT examples of

1. Job's original children dying because of God's discussion with Satan (cf. Job 1-2)
2. the Israeli soldiers dying because of Achan's sin (cf. Joshua 7)
3. David's first child with Bathsheba dying because of David's sin (cf. II Sam. 12:15).

We are all affected by the choices of others. This corporality can be seen in the NT in Rom. 5:12-21.

▣ **“For the Scripture says. . .”** The personification of Scripture is a way to show it is alive and relevant (cf. 10:6-8). Paul personifies “sin” and “death” in Romans 6-7)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:19-26

¹⁹You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?” ²⁰On 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? ²¹Or 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? ²²What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴*even us*, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. ²⁵As He says also in Hosea, “I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, ‘MY PEOPLE,’ AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, ‘BELOVED.’” ²⁶AND 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.”

9:19 “who resists His will” This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which emphasized a settled fact with continuing results (cf. II Chr. 20:6; Job 9:12; Ps. 135:6; Dan. 4:35). The diatribe continues. Logically, following Paul's diatribe is the best way to outline and understand Paul's thought. See chapter introduction, B., 1. God's will needs to be seen on two levels. The first is His redemptive plans for all of the fallen human race (cf. Gen. 3:15). These plans are unaffected by individual human choice. But on the second level, God chooses to use human instrumentality (cf. Exod. 3:7-9 and 10). People are chosen to accomplish His plans (both positively, Moses, and negatively, Pharaoh).

9:20-21 This imagery is taken from Isa. 29:16; 45:9-13; 64:8 and Jer. 18:1-12. The metaphor of YHWH as a potter was often used for God as creator because mankind comes from clay (cf. Gen. 2:7). Paul drove home his point of the sovereignty of the creator by the use of three more questions—the first two in v. 20 and the third in v. 21. The last question returns to the analogy of God's positive choice in Moses and negative choice in Pharaoh. This same contrast is seen in

1. Isaac – Ishmael, vv. 8-9
2. Jacob – Esau in vv. 10-12

3. the nation of Israel and the nation of Edom in v. 13

This same analogy is developed to reflect Paul's contemporary situation of believing and unbelieving Jews. God's positive choice is ultimately expressed in the inclusion of believing Gentiles (vv. 24-29, 30-33)!

The grammatical form expects

1. a "no" answer to the question of v. 20
2. a "yes" answer to the question in v. 21

9:22 "if" This is a partial FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed true from the author's perspective, but with no grammatical conclusion. Verses 22-24 are one sentence in Greek. Verse 22 expresses the redemptive character of God. God is a God of justice. He will hold humanity accountable for their deeds. But He is also a God of mercy. All humans deserve to die (cf. 1:18-3:21). Justice is not good news! God's character is primarily mercy, not wrath (cf. Deut.5:9-10; 7:9; Hos. 11:8-9). His choices are for redemption (cf. Ezek. 36:22-33). He is patient with sinful mankind (cf. Ezek. 18). He even uses evil for His redemptive purposes (e.g., Satan, Pharaoh, Witch of Endor, Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, and in chapter 11, unbelieving Israel)!



NASB	"willing to demonstrate His wrath"
NKJV	"wanting to show His wrath"
NRSV	"desiring to show his wrath"
TEV	"wanted to show his anger"
NJB	"is ready to show his anger"

God demonstrates His wrath to make known both His power (cf. v. 22) and the riches of His glory (cf. v. 23). God's actions always have redemptive purposes (except *Gehenna*, which is the final isolation of inalcitrant unbelief and sin).

▣ **"vessels of wrath"** This term continues Paul's metaphor of the clay from vv. 20 and 21. They obviously refer to unbelieving human beings who God uses to further His plan of redemption.



NASB, NKJV	"prepared"
NRSV	"are made"
TEV	"doomed"
NJB	"designed"

This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. The word is used in the papyri (Moulton and Milligan) of something prepared for its full destiny. Rebellious unbelief will have its day of justice and consequences. However, God chooses to use unbelievers to accomplish His wider, inclusive, redemptive purposes.

M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 2, says "Not fitted by God for destruction, but in an ADJECTIVAL sense, *ready*, *ripe* for destruction, the participle denoting a present state previously formed, but giving no hint of how it has been formed" (p. 716).

▣ **"destruction"** See Special Topic at 3:3.

9:23 "to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy" This purpose clause shows God's eternal intent (i.e., mercy). The VERB is an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. God made His riches known in sending Jesus!

Paul often refers to the riches of

1. His kindness and forbearance and patience, Rom. 2:4
2. His glory to vessels of mercy, Rom. 9:23

3. His grace, Eph. 1:7
4. the glory of His inheritance, Eph. 1:18
5. His grace in kindness toward us in Christ, Eph. 2:7
6. Christ to the Gentiles, Eph. 3:8
7. His glory, Eph. 3:16
8. the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, Col. 1:27

▣ **“which He prepared beforehand for glory”** This same truth is stated in Rom. 8:29-30 and Eph. 1:4,11. This chapter is the strongest expression of God’s sovereignty in the NT. There can be no dispute that God is in total charge of creation and redemption! This great truth should never be softened or finessed. However, it must be balanced with God’s choice of covenant as a means of relating to human creation, made in His image. It is surely true that some OT covenants, like Gen. 9:8-17 and 15:12-21, are unconditional and do not relate at all to human response, but other covenants are conditional on human response (i.e., Eden, Noah, Moses, David). God has a plan of redemption for His creation, no human can affect this plan. God has chosen to allow individuals to participate in His plans. This opportunity for participation is a theological tension between sovereignty (Romans 9) and human free will (Romans 10).

It is not appropriate to select one biblical emphasis and ignore another. There is tension between doctrines because eastern people present truth in dialectical or tension-filled pairs. Doctrines must be held in relationship to other doctrines. Truth is a mosaic of truths.

There is surely mystery here! Paul does not draw the logical conclusion to unbelievers prepared (*kataptizō*) for wrath (v. 22) and believers prepared (*proetomazō*) for glory (v. 23). Is God’s choice the only factor or is God’s choice based on mercy for all, but some reject His offer? Does humanity have any part in their own future (cf. 9:30-10:21)? There are overstatements on both sides (Augustine - Pelagius). For me the concept of covenant unites them both with the emphasis on God. Humanity can only respond to the initiatives of God (e.g., John 6:44,65). But for me, God’s character is not capricious, but merciful. He reaches out to all conscious human creation made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26,27). I struggle with this context. It is so powerful, yet it paints in black and white. Its focus is Jewish unbelief, which results in Gentile inclusion (chapter 11)! But this is not the only text on the character of God!

▣ **“glory”** See note at 3:23.

9:24 This verse shows that the object of God’s promise is wider than just racial Israel. God has shown mercy on mankind based on His choice. The promise of Gen. 3:15 is related to all mankind (because there are no Jews until chapter 12). The call of Abraham related to all mankind, Gen. 12:3. The call of Israel as a kingdom of priests related to all mankind (cf. Exod. 19:5-6)! This is the mystery of God, which was hidden, but is now fully revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11).

Paul’s assertion in v. 24 will be illustrated by a series of OT quotes (vv. 25-29).

1. verse 25, Hosea 2:23
2. verse 26, Hosea 1:10b
3. verse 27, Isaiah 10:22 and/or Hosea 1:10a
4. verse 28, Isaiah 10:23
5. verse 29, Isaiah 1:9

9:25-26 In context this passage is from the Septuagint (LXX) of Hosea 2:23 (with some modifications) and 1:10, where it referred to the Northern Ten Tribes, but here Paul refers to Gentiles. This is typical of NT authors’ use of the OT. They saw the church as the fulfillment of the promises to Israel (cf. II Cor. 6:16; Titus 2:14; I Pet. 2:5-9). In context the passage in Hosea refers to faithless Israel. If God could restore the idolatrous Northern Ten Tribes, Paul saw this as evidence of the love and forgiveness of God that would one day even include the idolatrous pagans (Gentiles).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:27-29

²⁷Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED; ²⁸FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY.” ²⁹And just as Isaiah foretold, “UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH.”

9:27

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NJB “though”

TEV “even if”

This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE (*ean* plus the SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD), which denotes potential action.

9:27-28 This is a loose quote from the Septuagint (LXX) of Isaiah 10:22-23. The Textus Receptus added a concluding phrase from the Septuagint of Isa. 10:23. But it is absent from the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁴⁶, \aleph , A, and B, which shows it was a later addition by a copyist. The UBS⁴ rates its omission as “certain.”

9:27 “LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA” This is part of the metaphorical, hyperbolic language of God’s promises to Abraham (cf. Gen.15:5; 22:17; 26:4).

▣ **“THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED”** The term “remnant” is used often in the OT Prophets to refer to those Israelites who were taken into exile, but would be brought back to the promised land by God. In Paul’s use of the term, it refers to those Jews who had a faith relationship with God and/or those who heard the gospel and responded by faith to Christ.

Even within Covenant Israel a spiritual separation occurred, only some were right with God. Israel’s election did not exclude the need for an individual faith response (cf. Isa. 1:16-20).

Paul is using the OT phrase which initially referred to Jewish exiles, only a few of whom returned to Palestine, to refer to those who heard the gospel, but the large number of them did not believe and receive Christ. Only a small percentage of first century hearers (Jews and Gentiles) responded to the gospel message. Paul calls those who did, the remnant.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE REMNANT, THREE SENSES

The OT concept of “a faithful remnant” is a recurrent theme of the Prophets (mostly in the eighth century prophets and Jeremiah). It is used in three senses:

1. those who survived the Exile (e.g., Isa. 10:20-23; 17:4-6; 37:31-32; Jer. 42:15,19; 44:12,14,28; Amos 1:8)
2. those who remain faithful to YHWH (e.g., Isa. 4:1-5; 11:11,16; 28:5; Joel 2:32; Amos 5:14-15; Micah 2:12-13; 4:6-7; 5:7-9; 7:18-20)
3. those who are a part of the eschatological renewal and recreation (e.g., Amos 9:11-15)

In this context God chooses only some (those with a faithful zeal) of the remnant (survivors of the Exile) to return to Judah. As we have seen before in this chapter, themes from Israel’s past recur (v. 6). God is reducing the numbers so that He can show His power, provision, and care (e.g., Gideon, Jdgs. 6-7).

9:28

NASB	“thoroughly and quickly”
NKJV	“finish. . .cut it short”
NRSV	“quickly and decisively”
TEV	“quickly settle his full account”
NJB	“without hesitation or delay”
REB	“will be summary and final”
NIV	“with speed and finality”
NET	“completely and quickly”

The two Greek words involve a word play (*sun* compounds so common in Paul).

1. *suntelōn*, PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE of
 - a. *sun*
 - b. *teleō*which basically means “to consummate” or “be fully realized” (cf. Mark 13:4; Luke 4:2,13; Acts 21:27; Heb. 8:8)
2. *suntemnōn*, PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE of
 - a. *sun*
 - b. *temnō*which basically means “to cut short” or “to execute quickly” (found only here, but a related form is in Acts 24:4)

Where these sound plays are used, only context, not etymology or parallels, is helpful.

God has a purpose and plan for the salvation of His true people and His judgment of all others!

This verse is difficult to interpret so several later scribes tried to add phrases to clarify what they thought it meant. The UBS⁴ gives the shortest text and “A” rating (certain).

9:29 This is a quote from the LXX of Isaiah 1:9, which denounces the sinfulness of national Israel.

▣ “LORD OF SABAOOTH” This was an OT title for YHWH, usually translated “Lord of Hosts” (cf. James 5:4). Depending on the context, this referred to God in a military sense, “captain of the army of heaven” (cf. Josh. 5:13-15), or administrative sense, usually a Babylonian astral polytheism context relating to the heavenly bodies, “Lord of the heavenly bodies.” Stars are creations, not gods; they do not control or shape events (cf. Gen. 1:16; Ps. 8:3; 147:4; Isa. 40:26).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

A. *El* (BDB 42, KB 48)

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts)
3. In the Bible *El* is not usually compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
 - a. *El-Elyon* (God Most High, BDB 42 & 751 II), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
 - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself,” BDB 42 & 909), Gen. 16:13
 - c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God the All Compassion” or “God of the mountain,” BDB 42 & 994), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3

- d. *El-Olam* (the Everlasting God, BDB 42 & 761), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God's promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
 - e. *El-Berit* ("God of the Covenant," BDB 42 & 136), Jdgs. 9:46
4. *El* is equated with
- a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
 - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, "I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father"
 - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
 - d. "jealousy" in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
 - e. "mercy" in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31;
 - f. "great and awesome" in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
 - g. "knowledge" in I Sam. 2:3
 - h. "my strong refuge" in II Sam. 22:33
 - i. "my avenger" in II Sam. 22:48
 - j. "holy one" in Isa. 5:16
 - k. "might" in Isa. 10:21
 - l. "my salvation" in Isa. 12:2
 - m. "great and powerful" in Jer. 32:18
 - n. "retribution" in Jer. 51:56
5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El*, *Elohim*, *YHWH*, repeated)
- B. *Elyon* (BDB 751, KB 832)
1. Its basic meaning is "high," "exalted," or "lifted up" (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
 2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
 - a. *Elohim* – Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
 - b. *YHWH* – Gen. 14:22; II am. 22:14
 - c. *El-Shaddai* – Ps. 91:1,9
 - d. *El* – Num. 24:16
 - e. *Elah* – used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for "High God") in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
 3. It is often used by non-Israelites.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
 - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
 - d. Luke's Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)
- C. *Elohim* (PLURAL), *Eloah* (SINGULAR), used primarily in poetry (BDB 43, KB 52)
1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
 2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 12:12; 20:3). Abraham's family were polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
 3. It can refer to Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).

4. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7.
5. In the Bible it is the first title/name for Deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Ps. 104).

It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as Psalm 14 (*Elohim*) is exactly like Psalm 53 (YHWH), except for the change in divine names.

6. Although PLURAL and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
7. This term is found in the mouths of non-Israelites as the name for deity.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:2
 - c. Moses, when speaking of the nations, Deut. 32:8
8. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is PLURAL! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
 - a. Hebrew has many PLURALS, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called “the plural of majesty,” where the PLURAL is used to magnify a concept.
 - b. This may refer to the angelic council, whom God meets with in heaven and who does His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
 - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods, and from the NT Jesus is God the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).

D. YHWH (BDB 217, KB 394)

1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant-making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Psalm 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4-3:24 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.

2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said “*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD” (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).
 - a. from an Arabic root, “to show fervent love”
 - b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
 - c. from a Ugartic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
 - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”
 - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)

- f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
 - g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:20), meaning “the ever-living, only-living One”
 - h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67). The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form.
 - (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah, BDB 219, cf. Exod. 15:2; 17:16; Ps. 89:9; 104:35)
 - (2) *Yahu* (“iah” ending of names, e.g., Isaiah)
 - (3) *Yo* (“Jo” beginning of names, e.g., Joshua or Joel)
3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
4. As with *El*, YHWH is often combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combination terms, here are some.
- a. *YHWH - Yireh* (YHWH will provide, BDB 217 & 906), Gen. 22:14
 - b. *YHWH - Ropheka* (YHWH is your healer, BDB 217 & 950, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 15:26
 - c. *YHWH - Nissi* (YHWH is my banner, BDB 217 & 651), Exod. 17:15
 - d. *YHWH - Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you, BDB 217 & 872, *Piel* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 31:13
 - e. *YHWH - Shalom* (YHWH is Peace, BDB 217 & 1022), Jdgs. 6:24
 - f. *YHWH - Sabaoth* (YHWH of hosts, BDB 217 & 878), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets
 - g. *YHWH - Ro’I* (YHWH is my shepherd, BDB 217 & 944, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Ps. 23:1
 - h. *YHWH - Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness, BDB 217 & 841), Jer. 23:6
 - i. *YHWH - Shammah* (YHWH is there, BDB 217 & 1027), Ezek. 48:35



NASB “unless. . .had left to us a posterity”
NKJV “unless. . .had left us a seed”
NRSV “had not left survivors”
TEV “had not left us some descendants”
NJB “not left us a few survivors”

The Hebrew text of Isa. 1:9 has “remnant,” but the Septuagint translated it “seed” (NKJV). God’s judgment of Israel always spared (1) the believing remnant or (2) the Messianic line. God spared the few to reach the many.



“Sodom. . .Gomorrah” Verse 28 related to God’s judgment. This verses specifically mentions two pagan cities which were destroyed by God in Gen. 19:24-26, but they became an idiom for God’s judgment (cf. Deut. 29:34; Isa. 13:19; Jer. 20:16; 49:18; 50:40; Amos 4:11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:30-33

³⁰What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; ³¹but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law. ³²Why? Because *they did not pursue* it by faith, but as though *it were* by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³just as it is written, “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.”

9:30-31 This is the surprising conclusion of God’s electing purpose. Verses 30-33 are a summary of chapter 9 and an introduction to chapter 10. Believing Gentiles are made right with God, but not all Jews (cf. v. 6)!

God deals with all mankind in a covenantal way. God always takes the initiative and sets the conditions. Individuals must respond by repentance and faith, obedience, and perseverance. Are humans saved

1. by God’s sovereignty
2. by God’s mercy through faith in the Messiah’s finished work
3. by an act of personal faith?

For “pursue” see note at 14:19.

9:30 “Righteousness” For this word group see Special Topic at 1:17. The NOUN is used three times in v. 30 and once in v. 31. The “righteousness” of faith is contrasted with the “righteousness” of the law. Again the contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant. The problems with the old covenant open the door of the gospel for the whole world in chapter 11.

9:32 “by works” The Textus Receptus added “of the law.” This was an addition by a later copyist. Paul did often use this phrase “works of the law” (cf. 3:20,28; Gal. 2:16; 3:2,5,10). However, the ancient Greek manuscripts P⁴⁶, \aleph^* , A, B, F, and G omit the term in this verse. The UBS⁴ rates the shorter text “B” (almost certain).

The key to God’s righteousness is not human performance but the character and gift of God through Christ. Righteousness is an impossible attainment by fallen mankind, but it is a freely offered gift through faith in Christ (cf. 3:21-31). However, it must be received (cf. v. 33; John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 4:1ff; 10:9-13; Eph. 2:8-9). This is the truth that sincere, religious, moral Jews (and all legalists) miss!

George Eldon Ladd in his book *A Theology of the New Testament*, makes a good point:

“Paul’s teaching about the Law is often approached from the perspective of the historical experience either of Paul himself as a Jewish rabbi, or of a typical first-century Jew under the Law. However, Paul’s thought must be seen neither as a confession of his spiritual autobiography, nor as a description of the legalistic character of first-century Pharisaism, but as a theological interpretation by a Christian thinker of two ways of righteousness: legalism and faith” (p. 495).

9:33 This is taken from Isa. 28:16 combined with 8:14.

“Behold I lay in Zion a stone,” 28:16a

“of stumbling and a rock of offense,” 8:14b

“and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed,” 28:16b

By combining these verses in this way (rabbinical technique) he changes the meaning of Isa. 28:16 from positive to negative. Paul manipulates the OT for his own purposes.

1. He chooses which translation (LXX, MT, or his own)
2. He changes the references (from exile to Gentiles)
3. He combines texts
4. He changes titles and PRONOUNS, which apply YHWH to Jesus

▣ **“he who believes in Him will not be disappointed”** This is from Isa. 28:16b. It is also quoted in Rom. 10:11 and is similar to Joel 2:32, quoted in Rom. 10:13. The key to salvation is both (1) the object (the cornerstone) and (2) the individual’s personal reception (faith in Him). See Special Topic: Believe at 4:5.

▣ **“A STONE”** This was originally a title for God (cf. Ps. 18:1-2,31,46; Deut. 32:18; I Sam. 2:2; Ps. 28:1; 31:3; 42:9; 71:3; 78:35), but it came to be a Messianic title (cf. Gen. 49:24; Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14; 28:16; Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45; Matt. 21:42-44). The key element of God’s covenant promise (the Messiah) was misunderstood and rejected (cf. I Cor. 1:23). The Jews misunderstood not only the Messiah’s purpose, but the basic requirements of God’s covenant. Christ became for the Jews a cause to stumble (cf. Isa. 8:14; Luke 2:34), but for the believers, both Jew and Gentile, He became the foundation stone (cf. Isa. 28:16; I Pet. 2:6-10).

SPECIAL TOPIC: CORNERSTONE

I. OT Usages

- A. The concept of a stone as a hard durable item which made a good foundation was used to describe YHWH (cf. Ps. 18:2).
- B. It then developed into a Messianic title (cf. Gen. 49:24; Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16).
- C. It came to represent a judgment from YHWH by the Messiah (cf. Isa. 8:14; Dan. 2:34-35,44-45).
- D. This developed into a building metaphor.
 1. a foundation stone, the first placed, which was secure and set the angles for the rest of the building, called “the cornerstone”
 2. it could also refer to the final stone put in place, which holds the walls together (cf. Zech. 4:7; Eph. 2:20,21), called “the capstone,” from the Hebrew *rush* (i.e., head)
 3. it could refer to the “key stone,” which is in the center of the doorway arch and holds the weight of the entire wall

II. NT Usages

- A. Jesus quoted Psalm 118 several times in reference to Himself (cf. Matt. 21:41-46; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17)
- B. Paul uses Psalm 118 in connection with YHWH’s rejection of faithless, rebellious Israel (cf. Rom. 9:33)
- C. Paul uses the concept of a “cornerstone” in Eph. 2:20-22 in reference to Christ
- D. Peter uses this concept of Jesus in I Pet. 2:1-10. Jesus is the cornerstone and believers are the living stones (i.e., believers as temples, cf. I Cor. 6:19), built on Him (i.e., Jesus is the new Temple, cf. Mark 14:58; Matt. 12:6; John 2:19-20). The Jews rejected the very foundation of their hope when they rejected Jesus as Messiah.

III. Theological Statements

- A. YHWH allowed David/Solomon to build a temple. He told them that if they kept the covenant He would bless them and be with them (cf. II Samuel 7), but if they did not the temple would be in ruins (cf. I Kgs. 9:1-9)!
- B. Rabbinical Judaism focused on form and ritual and neglected the personal aspect of faith (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). God seeks a daily, personal, godly relationship with those created in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Luke 20:17-18 contains frightening words of judgment, as does Matt. 5:20, directed at Judaism.

- C. Jesus used the concept of a temple to represent His physical body (cf. John 2:19-22). This continues and expands the concept of personal faith in Jesus as the Messiah is key to a relationship with YHWH (i.e., John 14:6; I John 5:10-12).
- D. Salvation is meant to restore the damaged image of God in human beings (Gen. 1:26-27 and chapter 3) so that fellowship with God is possible. The goal of Christianity is Christlikeness now. Believers are to become living stones (i.e., little temples built on/patterned after Christ).
- E. Jesus is the foundation of our faith and the capstone of our faith (i.e., the Alpha and Omega). Yet also the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense. To miss Him is to miss everything. There can be no middle ground here!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is chapter 9 (predestination) related to chapter 10 (mankind's free will)?
2. What is the main theme of chapter 9:1-29?
3. Has God broken His promise to Israel?
4. List the privileges that national Israel enjoyed (9:4-5).
5. Were all the Jews right with God? Why or why not (9:6)?
6. If man is forced to do God's will is he morally responsible?
7. How is "mercy" the key to predestination (cf. 15, 16, 18, 23; 11:30-32)?

ROMANS 10

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel and the Gospel	Israel Needs the Gospel	True Righteousness is by Faith	Israel and the Gospel	Israel Fails to See That It is God Who Makes Us Holy
9:30-10:4	10:1-13	9:30-10:4	9:30-10:4	10:1-4
Salvation for All			Salvation Is for All	The Testimony of Moses
10:5-13		10:5-13	10:5-13	10:5-13
	Israel Rejects the Gospel	Israel Responsible for Her Failures		Israel Has No Excuse
10:14-21	10:14-21	10:14-17	10:14-17	10:14-15
				10:16-17
		10:18-21	10:18-21	10:18-21

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapter 10 focuses on Israel's opportunities to respond to YHWH's gracious offer of salvation in Christ. Chapter 9 discussed God's choice of the Jews for the purpose of choosing the world (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6) but the Jews refused to embrace His choice (i.e., covenant obedience, cf. Deuteronomy 27-29).

- B. Paul is continuing to use the OT to make his case for the gospel (see Contextual Insights, E of chapter 9). This is characteristic of the apostolic sermons of Acts, which are known as the *kerygma* (i.e., that which was proclaimed). See Special Topic: the *Kerygma* at 1:2.
- C. The central truths of 9:30-10:4 are
1. The Gentiles have God's righteousness through faith in Christ
 2. The Jews do not have God's righteousness because of their lack of faith in Christ
 3. The Law could not give righteousness. It was a gift of God through faith in Christ and could not be earned by human performance (cf. 3:21-31)
- D. Bruce Corley and Curtis Vaughan in *A Study Guide Commentary, Romans*, published by Zondervan, pp. 115-116, have a helpful outline of the sins of the Jews
1. religious pride, 10:2a
 2. spiritual blindness, 10:2b, 3a
 3. self-righteousness, 10:3b
 4. unyielding stubbornness, 10:4a
- I also like their concluding remarks at the end of chapter 9 about chapter 10, "Election happens in the preaching of the cross (cf. I Thess. 1:4-10), which explains how the classical defense of divine sovereignty (9:6-29) can be followed by the greatest missionary passage in the letters of Paul (10:1-21). The highest mandate to preach the gospel is the knowledge that, in doing so, God is faithful carrying out His electing purpose in Christ" (p. 114).
- E. Like chapter 9, chapter 10 has numerous OT quotes.
1. v. 5 – Lev. 18:5
 2. v. 6 – Deut. 30:12 with introductory allusion to Deut. 9:4
 3. v. 7 – Deut. 30:13 with an allusion to Ps. 107:26
 4. v. 8 – Deut. 30:14
 5. v. 11 – Isa. 28:16
 6. v. 13 – Joel 2:32
 7. v. 15 – Isa. 52:7 or Nahum 1:15
 8. v. 16 – Isa. 53:1
 9. v. 18 – Ps. 19:4
 10. v. 19 – Deut. 32:21
 11. v. 20 – Isa. 65:1
 12. v. 21 – Isa. 65:2

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1-4

¹Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation. ²For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. ³For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. ⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

10:1 "Brethren" This term often is used by Paul to introduce a new subject (cf. 1:13; 7:1,4; 8:12).

▣ **“my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation”** Paul believed the Jews could be saved and that his prayer for them made a difference. This is the surprising counterpoint to predestination! See Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer at 9:3.

There is a Greek manuscript variation with “for them.” The Textus Receptus substituted “for Israel.” However, the manuscript evidence favors “for them” (MSS P⁴⁶, **ⲛ***, B, C, D*, F, G). The UBS⁴ gives it an “A” rating (certain).

10:2 “they have a zeal for God” Sincerity and enthusiasm are not enough (cf. vv. 3-4). Paul knew this well (cf. Acts 9:1; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:6)!

10:2-3 “but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God’s righteousness” The term “know” (v. 2, *epiginōskō*) can function in two ways.

1. the Jews did not understand a free gospel (Greek sense of “know”)
2. the Jews did not have a faith relationship with God (Hebrew sense of “know,” cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5)

The Jews were not ignorant of the need for a response to God (vv. 16,18,19), but they substituted human performance for faith, which led to pride, arrogance, and exclusivism (v. 3a)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (using mostly Deuteronomy as a paradigm)

The Hebrew word “know” (BDB 393) has several senses (semantic fields) in the *Qal*.

1. to understand good and evil – Gen. 3:22; Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:14-15; Jonah 4:11
2. to know by understanding – Deut. 9:2,3,6; 18:21
3. to know by experience – Deut. 3:19; 4:35; 8:2,3,5; 11:2; 20:20; 31:13; Josh. 23:14
4. to consider – Deut. 4:39; 11:2; 29:16
5. to know personally
 - a. a person – Gen. 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 22:2; 33:9
 - b. a god – Deut. 11:28; 13:2,6,13; 28:64; 29:26; 32:17
 - c. YHWH – Deut. 4:35,39; 7:9; 29:6; Isa. 1:3; 56:10-11
 - d. sexual – Gen. 4:1,17,25; 24:16; 38:26
6. a learned skill or knowledge – Isa. 29:11,12; Amos 5:16
7. be wise – Deut. 29:4; Pro. 1:2; 4:1; Isa. 29:24
8. God’s knowledge
 - a. of Moses – Deut. 34:10
 - b. of Israel – Deut. 31:21,27,29

10:3 “God’s righteousness” In the context of chapters 9-11 this phrase referred to God’s imputed right standing (Romans 4) with Himself based solely on

1. His mercy
2. the finished work of Christ
3. the wooing of the Spirit
4. sinful mankind’s repentant, faith response and continuing obedience and perseverance

One can surely understand how the Jews misunderstood God’s righteousness. The OT emphasized obedience to the Law (cf. Deut. 4:28-6:3,17,24-25). What they failed to recognize was the needed balance of faith and repentance (cf. Deut. 5:29-30; 6:5). Deuteronomy clearly asserts that God acted on Israel’s behalf not because of their righteousness, but because of His character (cf. 9:6,7,13,24,27; 10:12-22; Ezek.

36:22-38). Even the Canaanites were not dispossessed because of Israel's righteousness, but because of their sin (cf. 9:4-6; Gen. 15:16). See special topic at 1:17.

▣ **“they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God”** The VERB is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE, but it is translated as a MIDDLE VOICE (cf. TEV). The MIDDLE VOICE'S function is being taken over by the PASSIVE VOICE in Koine Greek. Context is the deciding factor.

This is literally “submit” which is a military term for a chain of command. The Jews tried to earn God's righteousness, but it was a gift (cf. 3:24; 5:15; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9). Paul saw this truth clearly on the road to Damascus.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SUBMISSION (*HUPOTASSŌ*)

The Septuagint uses this term to translate ten different Hebrew words. Its basic OT meaning was “to order” or “the right of command.” This is picked up in the Septuagint (LXX).

1. God commands (cf. Lev. 10:1; Jonah 2:1; 4:6-8)
2. Moses commands (cf. Exod. 36:6; Deut. 27:1)
3. kings command (cf. II Chr. 31:13)

In the NT this sense continues as in Acts 10:48, where an Apostle commands. However, new connotations are developed in the NT.

1. a voluntary aspect develops (often MIDDLE VOICE)
2. this self-limiting action can be seen in Jesus submitting to the Father (cf. Luke 2:51)
3. believers submit to aspects of culture so that the gospel will not be adversely affected
 - a. other believers (cf. Eph. 5:21)
 - b. believing wives (cf. Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:22-24; Titus 2:5; I Pet. 3:1)
 - c. believers to pagan governments (cf. Rom. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13)

Believers act out of motives of love, for God, for Christ, for the Kingdom, for the good of others.

Like *agapaō* (love) the church filled this term with new meaning based on the needs of the Kingdom and the needs of others. This term takes on a new nobility of selflessness, not based on a command, but on a new relationship to a self-giving God and His Messiah. Believers obey and submit for the good of the whole and the blessing of the family of God.

10:4

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “for Christ is the end of the law”

TEV “for Christ has brought the law to an end”

NJB “but now the law has come to an end with Christ”

This statement is in line with Matt. 5:17-48. The purpose, goal or end (*telos*) of the Law was not salvation, but conviction, and that purpose continues (cf. Gal. 3:24-25). The classical NT texts on this subject are Gal. 3:1-29 and the book of Hebrews.

When discussing this issue, context is crucial. Paul uses the OT in several different ways. When discussing the Christian life, the OT is God's revelation (cf. Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:6,11), but when discussing salvation it is void and has passed away (cf. Heb. 8:13). This is because it is a metaphor for the old age. The gospel of faith in Jesus is the new age of the Spirit. The Law's time is up! See Special Topic: Paul's Views of the Mosaic Law at 13:9.



NASB, NKJV “for righteousness to everyone who believes”
NRSV “so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes”
TEV “so that everyone who believes is put right with God”
NJB “so that all who have faith will be justified”

Chapters 9-11 must be interpreted together. The emphasis on God’s sovereignty stated so strongly in chapter 9 must be held in tension with the call for all to believe in chapter 10 (cf. vv. 4,9,11,13; 3:22; 4:11,16).

The universality of God’s love and redemptive purpose was stated in Gen. 3:15 and strongly implied in Gen. 12:3 and Exod. 19:5-6. The prophets often spoke of God’s universal love and plan to unite all mankind. The fact that there is one God and that He made all humans in His image provides a universal invitation to all to be saved. However, the mystery is that no one can respond without the agency of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65). Then the question becomes, “Does God draw all humans to salvation?” The answer must be, “Yes!” (cf. John 3:16; 4:42; I John 2:2; 4:14; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). The haunting paradox of sin, the fall, and Satan is that some say “No.” When Paul preached, some Jews responded, some did not; some Gentiles responded, some did not!

The term “believe” (*pisteuō*) is translated by three English terms, “believe,” “faith,” and “trust.” It is PRESENT TENSE, which speaks of continuing belief. It is not the acknowledgment of facts (theology, historical details, gospel information) that receives the gift of God’s grace through Christ. The NT is a covenant; God sets the agenda and initiates the necessary response, but the individual must respond in initial faith and repentance and ongoing faith and repentance. Obedience and perseverance are crucial. Christlikeness and ministry are the goal!

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK VERB TENSES USED FOR SALVATION

Salvation is not a product, but a relationship. It is not finished when one trusts Christ; it has only begun! It is not a fire insurance policy, nor a ticket to heaven, but a life of growing Christlikeness. We have a proverbial saying in America that says the longer a couple lives together, the more they begin to look alike. This is the goal of salvation!

SALVATION AS A COMPLETED ACTION (AORIST)

- Acts 15:11
- Romans 8:24
- II Timothy 1:9
- Titus 3:5
- Romans 13:11 (combines the AORIST with a FUTURE orientation)

SALVATION AS A STATE OF BEING (PERFECT)

- Ephesians 2:5,8

SALVATION AS A CONTINUING PROCESS (PRESENT)

- I Corinthians 1:18; 15:2
- II Corinthians 2:15
- I Peter 3:21

SALVATION AS A FUTURE CONSUMMATION (FUTURE in VERB TENSE or context)

- Romans 5:9,10; 10:9,13
- I Corinthians 3:15; 5:5

- Philippians 1:28;
- I Thessalonians 5:8-9
- Hebrews 1:14; 9:28
- I Peter 1:5,9

Therefore, salvation begins with an initial faith decision (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13), but this must issue in a process of lifestyle faith (cf. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 3:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10), which will one day be consummated in sight (cf. I John 3:2). This final state is called glorification. This can be illustrated as

1. initial glorification—justification (saved from the penalty of sin)
2. progressive salvation—sanctification (saved from the power of sin)
3. final salvation—glorification (saved from the presence of sin)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:5-13

⁵For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. ⁶But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: “DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, ‘WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?’ (that is, to bring Christ down), ⁷or ‘WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).” ⁸But what does it say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, in your mouth and in your heart”— that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, ⁹if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. ¹¹For the Scripture says, “WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.” ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; ¹³for “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”

10:5 This verse is an allusion to Lev. 18:5. Its promise is sure. If one could keep the Law, he would be acceptable to God (cf. Luke 10:28; Gal. 3:12). The problem is that Rom. 3:9,10-18,19,23; 5:18; 11:32 state the reality. All have sinned. The soul that sins shall die (cf. Gen. 2:17; Deut. 30:18; Ezek. 18:4,20). This old covenant path is closed. It has become a death sentence, a curse (cf. 7:10; Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14).

10:6-8 This is an allusion to Deut. 30:11-14 in the Septuagint (LXX), which Paul modified for his purposes. This text originally was spoken by Moses referring to the Law (esp. the context’s focus on love and a circumcised heart, cf. Deut. 30:6,16,20), but here it is applied to Jesus’ incarnation, death, and resurrection (cf. v. 9; Eph. 4:9-10). Paul’s point is that salvation is readily available in Jesus, the Messiah, through faith (cf. Deut. 30:15-20). It is easy; it is available; it is for all, which was so different from the Mosaic Law code.

10:6 “but the righteousness based on faith speaks” Paul has previously personified “sin,” “grace,” and “Scripture,” now he personifies “righteousness by faith.” It speaks in the OT quotes in vv. 6,7, and 8.

▣ **“HEART”** The heart stands for the reflective self. See Special Topic at 1:24.

▣ **“ASCEND. . .DESCEND”** Humans do not have to go seeking Christ; God has sent Him publicly for all. Human searching is not necessary.

10:8 “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU” This is a quote from Deut. 30:14. In Deut. 30:11 is the emphasis that YHWH’s will for His people, Israel, was obtainable (i.e., vv. 12-13). Paul uses the paragraph (vv. 11-14) to emphasize the immediate availability of the gospel!

10:9 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL which meant potential future action. Verse 9 is the content (*hoti*) of the message of faith.

▣ **“confess”** This compound term, *homologeō*, is literally “to say” and “the same,” and meant “to agree with publicly” (speak aloud so that others may hear). A public profession of faith in Christ is very important (cf. Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8; John 9:22; 12:42; I Tim. 6:12; I John 2:23; 4:15). The early church’s public profession was baptism. The candidate would profess faith in Christ in the formula “I believe Jesus is Lord.” See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION

- A. There are two forms of the same Greek root used for confession or profession, *homologeō* and *exomologeō*. The compound term is from *homo*, the same; *legō*, to speak; and *ex*, out of. The basic meaning is to say the same thing, to agree with. The *ex* added to the idea of a public declaration.
- B. The English translations of this word group are
 1. praise
 2. agree
 3. declare (cf. Matt. 7:23)
 4. profess
 5. confess
- C. This word group had two seemingly opposite usages
 1. to praise (God)
 2. to admit sinThese may have developed from mankind’s sense of the holiness of God and its own sinfulness. To acknowledge one truth is to acknowledge both.
- D. The NT usages of the word group are
 1. to promise (cf. Matt. 14:7; Acts 7:17)
 2. to agree or consent to something (cf. John 1:20; Luke 22:6; Acts 24:14; Heb. 11:13)
 3. to praise (cf. Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21; Rom. 14:11; 15:9)
 4. to assent to
 - a. a person (cf. Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8; John 9:22; 12:42; Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:11; I John 2:23; Rev. 3:5)
 - b. a truth (cf. Acts 23:8; II Cor. 11:13; I John 4:2)
 5. to make a public declaration of (legal sense developed into religious affirmation, cf. Acts 24:14; I Tim. 6:13)
 - a. without admission of guilt (cf. I Tim. 6:12; Heb. 10:23)
 - b. with an admission of guilt (cf. Matt. 3:6; Acts 19:18; Heb. 4:14; James 5:16; I John 1:9)



NASB **“Jesus as Lord”**
NKJV **“the Lord Jesus”**
NRSV, TEV,
NJB **“Jesus is Lord”**

This was the theological content of the early church’s profession of faith and baptismal liturgy. The use of “Lord” affirmed Jesus’ deity (cf. Joel 2:32; Acts 2:32-33,36; 10:36; I Cor. 12:3; II Cor. 4:5; Phil. 2:11; Col. 2:6), while the given name “Jesus” affirmed His historical humanity (cf. I John 4:1-3). The affirmation also functioned as a call to discipleship/Christlikeness.

The use of “Lord” related to the rabbinical substitution of YHWH with *Adon* when reading Scripture. See Special Topic: Names For Deity at 9:29. This is confirmed by the quote from Joel 2:32 that is in v. 13.

Jesus is given several powerful titles.

1. Jesus is the Messiah/Christ – Acts 5:42; 9:22; 17:3; 18:5,28; I Cor. 1:23
2. Jesus is the Son of God – Matt. 4:3,6; Acts 9:20; 13:33; Rom. 1:4
3. Jesus is Lord – see above

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD

This was a common NT phrase for the personal presence and active power of the Triune God in the church. It was not a magical formula, but an appeal to God’s character.

Often this phrase refers to Jesus as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:11)

1. at the profession of one’s faith in Jesus at baptism (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; Acts 2:38; 8:12,16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; I Cor. 1:13,15; James 2:7)
2. at an exorcism (cf. Matt. 7:22; Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49; 10:17; Acts 19:13)
3. at a healing (cf. Acts 3:6,16; 4:10; 9:34; James 5:14)
4. at an act of ministry (cf. Matt. 10:42; 18:5; Luke 9:48)
5. at the time of church discipline (cf. Matt. 18:15-20)
6. during preaching to Gentiles (cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 9:15; 15:17; Rom. 1:5)
7. in prayer (cf. John 14:13-14; 15:2,16; 16:23; I Cor. 1:2)
8. a way of referring to Christianity (cf. Acts 26:9; I Cor. 1:10; II Tim. 2:19; James 2:7; I Pet. 4:14)

Whatever we do as proclaimers, ministers, helpers, healers, exorcists, etc., we do in His character, His power, His provisions—in His Name!

▣ “believe in your heart” This phrase is parallel to confess, thereby giving the twin aspects of faith. The biblical term “believe” (*pistis*, see Special Topics at 4:3 and 4:5) involved

1. personal trust (Hebrew)
2. intellectual content (Greek)
3. an ongoing volitional commitment (cf. Deut. 30:20)

The term “heart” was used in its OT sense of the entire person. Paul mentioned “mouth” and “heart” in this context because of his quote from Deut. 30:14 quoted in v. 8. This was not meant to establish a hard and fast rule that one must pray out loud to be saved.

▣ “that God raised Him from the dead” Christianity stands or falls on the reality of the empty tomb (cf. 4:24; 8:11; I Corinthians 15). It is a central truth in the apostolic sermons (*kerygma*, see Special Topic at 1:2) of Acts (i.e., 2:31-32; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,37).

The Father raising the Son is proof of His acceptance of Jesus' life, teaching, and sacrifice. The NT asserts that all three Persons of the Trinity were involved in Jesus' resurrection.

1. the Father – Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 8:11; 10:9; I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; I Thess. 1:10
2. the Spirit – Rom. 8:11
3. the Son – John 2:19-22; 10:17-18

10:10 “resulting in righteousness” The goal of God for every believer is not only heaven someday, but Christlikeness now! The other strong passage on predestination, Eph. 1:3-14, powerfully asserts this truth in v. 4. Believers were chosen to be holy and blameless! Election is not only a doctrine, but it is a lifestyle (cf. Deut. 30:15-20).

Verse 10 reflects the twofold emphasis of the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20), salvation (make disciples) and righteousness (teach them to observe all that I commanded you). This same balance is found in Eph. 2:8-9 (a free salvation by God's grace through Christ) and a call to “good works” in Eph. 2:10. A people in His own image has always been God's desire.

10:11 This is a quote from Isa. 28:16 to which Paul has added the word “whoever.” In Isaiah this referred to faith in the Messiah, God's cornerstone (cf. 9:32-33). As Romans 9 magnifies God's sovereignty, chapter 10 magnifies the need for individuals, any and all individuals, to respond to Christ. The universal offer is clearly seen in the “everyone” of v. 4 and the “whosoever” of vv. 11, 13, and “all” of v. 12 (twice)! This is the theological balance to the selective (predestination) emphasis of chapter 9.

▣ **“believes in Him”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE with the PREPOSITION *epi* (cf. 4:24; 9:33; I Tim. 1:16). Believing is not only an initial response, but an ongoing requirement for salvation! It is not only correct theology (gospel truths) that saves, but personal relationship (gospel person) resulting in a godly lifestyle (gospel living). Beware of easy believism which separates truth from life, justification from sanctification. A faith that saves is a faith that persists and changes! Eternal life has observable characteristics! See Special Topic: Believes at 4:5.



NASB, TEV “not be disappointed”

NKJV, NRSV “will not to put to shame”

NJB “will have no cause for shame”

Those who trust (“believe”) in Christ will not be turned away. This is a quote from Isa. 28:16, which was a key verse in Paul's presentation in 9:33.

10:12 “for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek” This is the major thrust of the New Covenant (cf. Rom. 3:22,29; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:11-3:13; Col. 3:11). The One God has redeemed His lost creation through His own actions. He desires all humans who are made in His image to come to Him and be like Him! All may come to Him!

The universal nature of the gospel (“all” used twice in v. 12) cuts two ways.

1. there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles; all are lost (cf. 3:9,19,22-23; 11:32)
2. there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles; all can be saved

The gospel removes all human barriers (cf. Joel 2:28-29; I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11), at least in the area of salvation.

▣ **“abounding in riches”** When Paul thinks of the grace of God in Christ, he uses the word “riches” often (cf. 2:4; 9:23; 11:12 [twice],33; I Cor. 1:5; II Cor. 8:9; Eph. 1:7,18; 2:7; 3:8,16; Phil. 4:19; Col. 1:27; 2:2).

10:13 This famous quote from Joel 2:32 has two new emphases in Paul's usage

1. in Joel YHWH's name was used, Paul in Romans and Peter in Acts 2:21 substituted Jesus' name (also notice John 12:41 and Isa. 6:9-10; Phil. 2:9 and Isa. 45:22-25; Rom. 9:33 and Isa. 8:13-14)
2. in Joel "saved" implied physical deliverance, in Romans it referred to spiritual forgiveness and eternal salvation

The OT concept of "to call upon the name" implied a public confession of faith in a worship setting. This same concept is seen in Acts 7:59; 9:14,21; 22:16; I Cor. 1:2; II Tim. 2:22. See Special Topic: Called at 1:6.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:14-15

¹⁴How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!"

10:14-15 There is a series of questions followed by OT quotes which makes the point that Israel has never responded to YHWH's messages or messengers (cf. Nehemiah 9; Acts 7). God sends messengers (prophets, apostles, preachers, teachers, evangelists). These messengers are God's blessings to a needy world. As God graciously sends gospel messengers the hearers must respond appropriately to their message. Paul clinched this thought by a quote from Isa. 52:7. Paul expands this OT verse to refer to gospel preachers.

Saving faith has several elements: (1) a message to be believed; (2) a person to be received; (3) an initial and ongoing repentant and faith response; (4) a life of obedience; and (5) perseverance (see note at 1:5).

10:15 This is a quote from Isa. 52:70. It is the great commission of Romans. Salvation comes by hearing the gospel and receiving the gospel. Preachers are sent so that "all" may be saved!

Some ancient Greek texts (i.e., MSS \aleph^2 , D, F, G, and many versions) add a phrase from the LXX of Isa. 52:7. The UBS⁴ gives the shorter text an "A" rating (certain).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NJB "how beautiful are the feet"

TEV "how wonderful is the coming"

NET "How timely is the arrival"

NET footnote "coming at the right or opportune time"

The term "beautiful" is used in a metaphorical sense. Here it refers to "time," not looks.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:16-17

¹⁶However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" ¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

10:16 Again Paul uses OT prophetic statements, which originally referred to YHWH's message to Israel, to refer to the gospel of Jesus the Messiah. As the Jews of OT rejected God's message, so the Jews of Paul's day rejected it. This is a quote from Isa. 53:1 but is also theologically related to Israel's rejection of God's message in Isa. 6:9-13.

10:17 The gospel is first a message (cf. Gal. 3:2). But the message proclaimed becomes a personal word, "the word of Christ received" (cf. Col. 3:15-16).

▣ **“the word of Christ”** Because of the context this must refer to the message about Christ that was preached. Gospel preaching is God’s way to convey His offer in Christ to the world.

There is an ancient Greek manuscript variation at this point.

1. MSS P⁴⁶, \aleph^* , B, C, D* have “the word of Christ”
2. MSS \aleph^c , A, D^c, K, P have “the word of God”

The first is the most unusual (cf. Col. 3:16) and, therefore, probably original (this is one of the basic tenants of textual criticism). The UBS⁴ gives it an “A” rating (certain). This is the only other place it appears in the NT. The second, “the word of God,” appears several times (cf. Luke 3:2; John 3:34; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 6:5 and 11:3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:18-21

¹⁸But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? Indeed they have; “THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.” ¹⁹But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says, “I WILL MAKE YOU JEALOUS BY THAT WHICH IS NOT A NATION, BY A NATION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WILL I ANGER YOU.” ²⁰And Isaiah is very bold and says, “I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME.” ²¹But as for Israel He says, “ALL THE DAY LONG I HAVE STRETCHED OUT MY HANDS TO A DISOBEDIENT AND OBSTINATE PEOPLE.”

10:18 This verse asserts that most Jews had heard the message and that they were responsible for rejecting it (an emphatic DOUBLE NEGATIVE Greek phrase; the question expects a “no” answer). The problem was not ignorance, but willful unbelief!

Paul quotes Ps. 19:4. In this Psalm vv. 1-6 refer to natural revelation, which is God speaking through creation (cf. Romans 1-2). Paul changes

1. the universal witness (“into all the earth” and “to the ends of the world”)
2. the means of transmitting the message from the silent voice of creation to gospel preachers (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor, and teachers, cf. Eph. 4:11), which refers to special revelation (cf. Ps. 19:8-14)

The main thought is that the gospel message had gone out into the known world of Paul’s day (Greco-Roman world). Paul is using rabbinical hermeneutics; he alters the original OT context for his theological, polemical purposes. It must also be stated clearly that Paul’s use of the OT, like the other Apostles, was uniquely guided by the Holy Spirit (cf. II Pet. 1:20-21). Believers today, under the illumination of the Spirit, cannot reproduce the interpretive methods of NT writers.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ILLUMINATION

“God has acted in the past to clearly reveal Himself to mankind. In theology this is called revelation. He selected certain men to record and explain this self-revelation. In theology this is called inspiration. He has sent His Spirit to help readers understand His word. In theology this is called illumination. The problem arises when we assert that the Spirit is involved in understanding God’s word—so why are there so many interpretations of it?

Part of the problem lies in the reader’s pre-understanding or personal experiences. Often a personal agenda is addressed by using the Bible in a proof-text or atomistic fashion. Often a theological grid is imposed over the Bible allowing it to speak only in certain areas and in selected ways. Illumination simply cannot be equated with inspiration although the Holy Spirit is involved in each.

The best approach may be to attempt to assert the central idea of a paragraph, not interpret every detail of the text. It is the topical thought which conveys the original author’s central truth. Outlining the book

or literary unit helps one follow the intent of the original inspired author. No interpreter is inspired. We cannot reproduce the biblical writer's method of interpretation. We can and must attempt to understand what they were saying to their day and then communicate that truth to our own day. There are parts of the Bible that are ambiguous or hidden (until a certain time or period). There will always be disagreements on some texts and subjects but we must state clearly the central truths and allow freedom for individual interpretations within the boundary of the original author's intent. Interpreters must walk in the light they have, always being open to more light from the Bible and the Spirit. God will judge us based on the level of our understanding and how we live out that understanding.

10:19-20 The Jews have heard the message (both vv. 18 and 19 are questions that expect a “no” answer), even from Moses. The Jews heard and were able to understand the inclusive faith message about all being right with God.

In these verses, God spoke to His covenant people about the inclusion of the Gentiles. This is done by means of a quote from Deut. 32:21 in v. 19 and Isa. 65:1-2 in vv. 20-21. This shocking inclusion of the Gentiles was meant to stimulate (through jealousy) the Jews to faith (cf. 11:11,14).

10:21 This statement is a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 65:2 concerning the covenant people's rejection of YHWH (cf. Isa. 65:1-7). God has been faithful; Israel has been unfaithful. Their unfaithfulness led to temporal judgment on the nation as well as individuals in the past, but their rejection of God's righteousness through faith in Christ will lead to eternal judgment!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. If God's choice is so crucial why does Paul pray for Israel in 10:1? Why is 10:9-13 so emphatic on the need for human response?
2. What does v. 4 mean? “Has Christ put an end to the law?”
3. List the elements involved in belief in 10:9-10.
4. Why does Paul quote so often from the OT? How does this relate to a primarily Gentile church in Rome?
5. How are verses 11-13 related to chapter 9?
6. How are verses 14-15 related to world missions?
7. How is man's free will shown to be a part of man's salvation in chapter 10?

ROMANS 11

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Remnant of Israel	Israel's Rejection Not Total	Israel's Rejection Not Final	God's Mercy on Israel	The Remnant of Israel
11:1-10	11:1-10	11:1-10	11:1-6 11:7-10	11:1-6 11:7-10
The Salvation of Gentiles	Israel's Rejection Not Final			The Jews to be Restored in the Future
11:11-12	11:11-36	11:11-12	11:11-12 The Salvation of the Gentiles	11:11-12
11:13-16		11:13-16	11:13-15	11:13-15
11:17-24		The Metaphor of the Olive Tree 11:17-24	11:16-18 11:19-24	The Jews Are Still the Chosen People 11:16-24
The Restoration of Israel		All Israel Will Be Saved	God's Mercy on All	The Conversion of the Jews
11:25-32		11:25-32	11:25-32 Praise to God	11:25-29 11:30-32 A Hymn to God's Mercy and Wisdom
11:33-36		11:33-36	11:33-36	11:33-36

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapter 11 continues the paradoxical relationship between election and gospel. OT election was for service, while NT election is for salvation (check your concordance!). In a sense believers are called to be both God's family (NT) and servants (OT). Election is both corporate and individual, positive and negative (Jacob/Israel-Esau/Edom; Moses/Pharaoh). Ultimately the tension is not only between God's sovereignty and human's free will, but in the very character of God. Chapters 9-11 emphasize again and again the mercy of God and the rebellion of fallen mankind. God is faithful, human are faithless.
- Election is not a doctrine to exclude some, but a foundation of hope, security and confidence for those who have responded to (1) the promises and (2) the Son of the covenant-making God.
- B. In chapter 9 Paul asserted the sovereignty and freedom of God. Even in a covenant relationship, God is free. In chapter 10 Paul asserted that the Jews were free to accept or reject God's promises and covenants. Since they proved to be unfaithful and rejected God's promises and covenant, they were, in one sense, rejected by God. However, in chapter 11 Paul will affirm God's faithfulness, even in the face of Israel's unfaithfulness (cf. Deuteronomy 8).
- C. In the past, as in the present, a Jewish remnant believed and exercised faith in God's Messiah. Paul himself was an example of this. The rejection of some unbelieving Jews allowed the inclusion of the believing Gentiles. The inclusion of the Gentiles will result in the (1) the complete people of God or (2) the full number of God's elect, both Jew and Gentile. This Gentile inclusion will motivate Israel to trust in God's Messiah, Jesus.
- D. As in chapters 9 and 10, Paul uses several OT quotes in chapter 11.
1. v. 3 – I Kgs. 19:14
 2. v. 4 – I Kgs. 19:18
 3. v. 8 – Isa. 29:10 and Deut. 29:4
 4. v. 9 – Ps. 69:22
 5. v. 10 – Ps. 69:23
 6. v. 26 – Isa. 59:20-21
 7. v. 27 – Isa. 27:9
 8. v. 34 – Isa. 40:13-14
 9. v. 35 – Job 35:7; 41:11

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1-6

¹I 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. ²God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in *the passage about Elijah*, how he pleads with God against Israel? ³“Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE.” ⁴But what is the divine response to him? “I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.” ⁵In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. ⁶But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.

11:1 “God has not rejected His people, has He” This question expects a “no” answer. Paul answers this question in vv. 1b-10. This section must relate to Paul’s previous argument. Chapters 9-11 form a literary unit, a sustained argument.

The word translated “reject” (AORIST MIDDLE [deponent] INDICATIVE) basically means “to refuse” or “to cast off.” It is used in

1. Acts 7:39 – Israel in the wilderness rejecting Moses’ leadership
2. Acts 13:46 – the Jews of the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch rejecting Paul’s preaching of the gospel
3. I Tim. 1:19 – some members of the church at Ephesus rejecting and making shipwrecks of their faith (i.e., Hymenaeus and Alexander)

YHWH did not cast off Israel! Israel cast off YHWH by her continued disobedience, idolatry, and now self-righteous legalism.

It is interesting to note that the early Greek papyrus manuscript P⁴⁶ and the uncials F and G have “inheritance” instead of “people,” which may be from the LXX of Ps. 94:14. The UBS⁴ gives “people” an “A” rating (certain).

▣ **“May it never be”** This is Paul’s characteristic way of rejecting the questions of the hypothetical objector (diatribe, cf. 3:4,6,31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11).

▣ **“I too am an Israelite”** Paul uses himself to prove the existence of a believing Jewish remnant. For further amplification of Paul’s Jewish background see Phil. 3:5.

▣ **11:2 “God has not rejected His people”** This may be an allusion to Ps. 94:14 (cf. Deut. 31:6; I Sam. 12:22; I Kgs. 6:13; Lam. 3:31-32). It is a specific answer to the question of v. 1.

▣ **“whom He foreknew”** This is an obvious reference to God’s election of Israel. See note at 8:29. It takes the argument back to chapter 9, as do vv. 4-6. The key was not Israel’s performance, but God’s choice. God is faithful to His promises because of who He is, not because of Israel’s performance (cf. Ezek. 36:22-32).

▣ **“the Scripture says”** This is a reference to the account of Elijah’s flight from Jezebel in I Kings 19:10, quoted in v. 3.

11:4 “I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND” “For Myself” is not in the Masoretic Hebrew text of I Kgs. 19:18 (Paul does not quote the MT or the LXX), but is added by Paul to emphasize God’s choice. The faithful remnant of I Kgs. 19:18 is viewed from God’s choice, not their rejection of Ba’al worship.

The point Paul is making is that there was a small group of believers even in faithless, idolatrous Israel of Elijah’s day. In Paul’s day there was also a believing remnant of Jewish people (see Special Topic at 9:27-28). In every age some Jews have responded by faith. Paul asserts that these believing Jews are energized by the mercy and grace of God (vv. 5-6).

▣ **“to Baal”** This is a FEMININE ARTICLE with a MASCULINE NOUN. This was because the Jews regularly inserted vowels from the FEMININE Hebrew word “shame” (*bosheth*) into the consonants of the names of pagan deities to make fun of them.

11:5-6 These are key verses. They link the past actions of God in the OT to the current situation. The link is the election of God by mercy (cf. 9:15,16,18; 11:30,31,32). God’s Grace is priority, but human faith is necessary (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21), however, not based at all on human merit (cf. Eph. 2:8-9; II Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5). These truths are crucial in Paul’s argumentation throughout chapters 9-11.

11:6 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Salvation is by God’s grace (see note at 3:24, cf. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9).

▣ The KJV adds a concluding phrase to v. 6, “But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no longer work.” This phrase is not included in most ancient Greek manuscripts P⁴⁶, \aleph^* , A, C, D, G, or P, and the Old Latin versions, but two different forms of the phrase appear in manuscripts \aleph^c and B. The UBS⁴ rates their omission as “A” (certain).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:7-10

⁷What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; ⁸just as it is written, “GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY.” ⁹And David says, “LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM. ¹⁰“LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER.”

11:7 “What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained” This is placed first in the Greek sentence to emphasize Paul’s thought. Many Jews were seeking to be right with God and they pursued this in the performance of religious ritual, racial privilege, and self-effort. They missed their goal! No flesh will glory before God (cf. I Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9).



NASB	“but those who were chosen obtained it”
NKJV	“but the elect have obtained it”
NRSV	“The elect obtained it”
TEV	“It was only the small group that God chose who found it”
NJB	“but only the chosen few”

This is the OT concept of “remnant” (see Special Topic at 9:27-28), here referring to the 7,000 of I Kgs. 19:18. The key is not human effort, race, or religiosity (v. 6), but the grace of God in election (cf. Eph. 1:3-14).

▣ **“the rest were hardened”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE (cf. II Cor. 3:14). The implication is that God hardened them (cf. vv. 8-10). The agent of hardening is the evil one (cf. II Cor. 4:4). “Hardened” (*pōroō*) is a medical term for callousness or blindness (cf. Rom. 11:25; II Cor. 3:14; Eph. 4:18). This same term is used of the Apostles in Mark 6:52. It is a different Greek term from 9:18 (*sklērunō*) which is the opposite of mercy (cf. Heb. 3:8,15; 4:7).

This verse is very clear and is a summary of 11:1-6. Some who were chosen believed, some who were not chosen were hardened. However, this verse was not written in isolation, as a theological slogan. It was part of a sustained theological argument. There is a tension between the truth stated so clearly in this verse and the universal invitations of chapter 10. There is mystery here. But the solution is not to negate or minimize either of the horns of the dilemma, the paradoxical poles.

11:8-10 These verses are quotes taken from Isa. 29:10 (v. 8a), Deut. 29:4 (v. 8b, but not from the MT or the LXX) and Ps. 69:22-23 (vv. 9-10). They truly reflect the call and mission of Isaiah to a rebellious Israel in 6:9-13. Isaiah would present God’s word, but God’s people could not, would not respond. Paul is giving OT attestation to God’s hardening of some as he did in 9:13,15,17.

11:8

NASB, NKJV “God gave them a spirit of stupor”

NRSV, NJB “God gave them a sluggish spirit”

TEV “God made their minds and hearts dull”

This Greek word (*katamuxis*), used only here in the NT, is used of an insect bite that dulls the senses by inducing too much sensation.

11:10 “LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER” This is an AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE followed by an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This is the mystery of God’s sovereignty and mankind’s necessary response. God is the source of all things, the initiator of all things, yet in His sovereign will He has decreed that humans, His ultimate creation, freely respond to Him. Those who do not respond in faith are hardened (i.e., their choice, finalized) in their unbelief.

In this context Paul asserts God’s eternal plan for redeeming all of Adam’s children. Jewish unbelief will open the door of faith to the Gentiles and through jealousy restore national Israel! It is a plan of inclusion (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13), not exclusion! Hardening serves a greater harvest (i.e., Pharaoh)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:11-16

¹¹I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. ¹²Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! ¹³But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. ¹⁵For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the dead? ¹⁶If the first piece *of dough* is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.

11:11 “I say then” This is the same rhetorical phrase as 11:1. It continues Paul’s theological argument in a different way. In vv. 1-10 not all Israel is rejected by God; in vv. 11-24 Israel’s rejection is not permanent; it is purposeful. Through it the Gentiles have been included.

▣

NASB “they did not stumble so as to fall, did they”

NKJV, NRSV “have they stumbled that they should fall”

TEV “When the Jews stumbled, did they fall to their ruin”

NJB “Have the Jews fallen for ever, or have they just stumbled”

This question expected a “no” answer. Israel’s unbelief is not a permanent situation.

▣

NASB “by their transgression”

NKJV “through their fall”

NRSV “through their stumbling”

TEV “Because they sinned”

NJB “their fall”

In context, this refers to the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Messiah (cf. v. 12).

▣ “salvation *has come* to the Gentiles” What a shocking statement this was to first century Jews (cf. v. 12; Acts 13:46; 18:6; 22:21; 28:28).

▣ **“to make them jealous”** The term “jealous” occurs in 10:19 and 11:14. God’s plan of including the Gentiles serves two purposes.

1. God’s redemption of all mankind
2. God’s restoration of a repentant remnant of Israel to personal faith

I personally wonder if #2 involves

1. an end-time Jewish revival (cf. Zech. 12:10)
2. Jewish believers of the first century and every century
3. modern Messianic synagogues could be the promised fulfillment

11:12-14 In these verses there is a series of ten **CONDITIONAL SENTENCES** which relate to Jewish unbelief in relation to Gentile belief. Verses 12,14,15,16,17,18,21,24 are **FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES** which are assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purpose, while vv. 22 and 23 are **THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES** which indicate potential future action.

11:12

NASB “how much more will their fulfillment be”

NKJV “how much more their fullness”

NRSV “How much more will their full inclusion mean”

TEV “Then, how much greater the blessings will be, when the complete number of Jews is included”

NJB “then think how much more it will benefit from the conversion of them all”

The crux of interpretation is the meaning of the term “their fullness.” Is it related to (1) Jews being saved, vv. 14b, 26a, or (2) the final number of elect believing Jews and Gentiles?

11:13 “I am speaking to you who are Gentiles” Chapters 9-11 form a literary unit that answered the question, “Why has the Jewish Messiah been rejected by the Jews?” However, the question remains why Paul felt the need in this letter, at this point in his presentation, to deal with this question.

Verses 13-24, 25c seem to reflect a problem in the church at Rome between racial Jews and Gentiles. Whether it was between believing Jews and believing Gentiles or believing Gentiles and unbelieving Jews (the synagogue) is uncertain.

▣ **“I am an apostle of Gentiles”** Paul felt uniquely called to minister to the Gentile world (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 1:5; 15:16; Gal. 1:16; 2:7,9; I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 4:17).

▣

NASB, NKJV “I magnify my ministry”

NRSV “I glorify my ministry”

TEV “I will take pride in my work”

NJB “and I am proud of being sent”

The term “magnify” could mean (1) thankfulness; (2) pride in; or possibly (3) making the most of something. This may also reflect a problem in the church at Rome! Paul (1) is pleased to serve Gentiles or (2) saw his ministry as making the unbelieving Jews jealous, which would result in their salvation (cf. vv. 11,14 and 9:1-3).

11:14 “save some of them” This is Paul’s evangelistic calling. He knew some would respond to gospel preaching (cf. I Cor. 1:21), while others would not (cf. I Cor. 9:22). This is the mystery of election (OT and NT)!

11:15 The rejection (different word than v. 1) of the OT chosen Israel was part of God's plan for the redemption of all humanity (*kosmos*). Jewish self-righteous, racial arrogance, and legalism clearly accentuated the need for faith (cf. 9:30-33). Faith in YHWH and His Messiah is the key to right standing, not human religious performance. But remember, the rejection of Israel was for the purpose of redeeming the whole of humanity. There is no place for human pride, neither Jewish nor Gentile. This apparently is a message that the Roman church needed to hear!

▣ **“the reconciliation of the world”** This is theologically parallel to “the righteousness of God.” The compound term comes from *kata* plus *alassō* (to change, alter, or transform). It refers to the exchange of hostility for peace, thereby, restoration of favor (cf. Rom. 5:11; 11:15; II Cor. 5:18,19). God seeks restoration of the fellowship of Eden. Sin broke that fellowship, but Christ has restored the image of God in fallen humanity for all who exercise faith. They are reconciled and accepted (parallelism of v. 15). Mankind could not restore this intimacy, but God can and did!

▣ **“but life from the dead”** The context is addressing national Israel, so

1. does this phrase refer to a restored national Israel
2. does this phrase refer to the “full number” of Jews and Gentiles (i.e., spiritual Israel, cf. 9:6; 11:25-26)
3. does this phrase (cf. 6:13) refer to new age life, resurrection life?

I like #3. For my reasons see “Crucial Introductory Article,” in my commentary on Revelation online free at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

11:16 “if the first piece of dough be holy” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. It is an allusion to Num. 15:17-21. It is a metaphor which is similar to the OT concept of First Fruits (or the tithe) which were given to God to show that the whole harvest belonged to Him.

The ancient believing Jewish remnant still had an effect on the whole nation (cf. Gen. 18:27-33; II Chr. 7:14). The metaphor of “first piece” is parallel to “the root” (cf. Jer. 11:16-17), both of which refer to the faithful ones of Israel, particularly the Patriarchs (i.e., “the root” of vv. 16-17) of the OT (cf. v. 28).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:17-24

¹⁷But if some of the branches were 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, ¹⁸do 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. ¹⁹You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” ²⁰Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; ²¹for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. ²²Behold 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 also will be cut off. ²³And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural *branches* be grafted into their own olive tree?

11:17-24 Surprisingly “you” in this paragraph is SINGULAR (the PLURAL reappears in v. 25). What does this mean?

1. one Gentile as a symbol of all Gentiles
2. the problem in the Roman church between Jewish and Gentile leadership, thereby, referring to the leaders of the current Gentile leadership (cf. vv. 18-20)

11:17 “if” See note at 11:12-24.

▣ **“the branches were broken off”** This refers to the unbelieving Israelites (cf. vv. 18,19, “natural branches,” v. 21).

▣ **“the wild olive”** This refers to believing Gentiles who respond to gospel preaching.

▣ **“grafted”** Paul continues the agricultural metaphor begun in v. 16. The grafting of wild olive branches into an established tree helped improve yields (cf. v. 24).

▣ **“of the rich root”** The literal original phrase, “the root of the fatness” (UBS⁴ gives it a “B” rating [almost certain]), is found in MSS \aleph^* , B, C. There are several other readings in the Greek manuscript traditions that try to smooth out this asyndeton (Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 526).

▣ **“the olive tree”** This is a symbol of national Israel (cf. v. 24; Ps. 52:8; 128:3; Jer. 11:16; Hos. 14:6). This is Paul’s second OT metaphor to describe the relationship between Jews and Gentiles.

11:18 “do not be arrogant toward the branches” This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means stop an act already in process. This verse, plus vv. 13, 20, 25, implies that there was a problem in the church of Rome between believing Jews and Gentiles.

11:19-20 Verse 19 is another diatribe (a supposed objector). Paul explains why the Jews were rejected. It was because of their unbelief, not because the Gentiles were loved more! The Gentiles were only included because of God’s love (cf. Gen. 3:15) and their faith! They also could cause the Jews to return to God because of jealousy (cf. vv. 11,14).

11:20

NASB “but you stand by your faith”

NKJV “and you stand by faith”

NRSV “but you stand only through faith”

TEV “while you remain in place because you do believe”

NJB “if you still hold firm, it is only thanks to your faith”

This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. However, it is in the context of ten CONDITIONAL SENTENCES. Our standing before God is and continues to be by faith. If faith ceases, our standing ceases. Salvation is (1) an initial faith response; (2) a state of being in faith; (3) an ongoing process of faith; and (4) a final culmination of faith. Be careful of any theological system that only focuses on one of these biblical truths. See Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses Used for Salvation at 10:4.

God is the author, initiator, sustainer, and culminator of salvation, but in a covenant pattern. He has chosen that sinful mankind must respond and continue to respond by repentance and faith at every step of the process. He expects obedience, Christlikeness, and perseverance!

▣

NASB “Do not be conceited, but fear”

NKJV “Do not be haughty, but fear”

NRSV “So do not become proud, but stand in awe”

TEV “But do not be proud of it; instead, be afraid”

NJB “Rather than making you proud, that should make you afraid”

Both of these statements are PRESENT IMPERATIVES. The first has the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act already in process. It revealed a problem in the Roman church. The reason for the fear is stated in v. 21.

11:21 “neither will He spare you” As Israel apostatized and went away from YHWH in prideful unbelief and was cut off, so will the church be cut off if she leaves faith in Christ through prideful self-righteousness. Initial faith must be followed by lifestyle faith (cf. Matt. 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-12; Luke 8:4-10). Pride must be continually resisted. We are what we are by the grace of God and we are brothers with all who also trust Christ!

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (*APHISTĒMI*)

This Greek term *aphistēmi* has a wide semantic field. However, the English term “apostasy” is derived from this term and prejudices its usage to modern readers. Context, as always, is the key, not a preset definition.

This is a compound term from the preposition *apo*, which means “from” or “away from” and *histēmi*, “to sit,” “to stand,” or “to fix.” Notice the following (non-theological) usages:

1. to remove physically
 - a. from the Temple, Luke 2:37
 - b. from a house, Mark 13:34
 - c. from a person, Mark 12:12; 14:50; Acts 5:38
 - d. from all things, Matt. 19:27,29
2. to remove politically, Acts 5:37
3. to remove relationally, Acts 5:38; 15:38; 19:9; 22:29
4. to remove legally (divorce), Deut. 24:1,3 (LXX) and NT, Matt. 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4; I Cor. 7:11
5. to remove a debt, Matt. 18:24
6. to show unconcern by leaving, Matt. 4:20; 22:27; John 4:28; 16:32
7. to show concern by not leaving, John 8:29; 14:18
8. to allow or permit, Matt. 13:30; 19:14; Mark 14:6; Luke 13:8

In a theological sense the VERB also has a wide usage:

1. to cancel, pardon, remit the guilt of sin, Exod.32:32 (LXX); Num. 14:19; Job 42:10 and NT, Matt. 6:12,14-15; Mark 11:25-26
2. to refrain from sin, II Tim. 2:19
3. to neglect by moving away from
 - a. the Law, Matt. 23:23; Acts 21:21
 - b. the faith, Ezek. 20:8 (LXX); Luke 8:13; II Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1; Heb. 2:13

Modern believers ask many theological questions that the NT writers would have never thought about. One of these would relate to the modern tendency to separate faith from faithfulness.

There are persons in the Bible who are involved in the people of God and something happens.

A. Old Testament

1. Those who heard the twelve (ten) spies’ report, Numbers 14 (cf. Heb. 3:16-19)
2. Korah, Numbers 16
3. Eli’s sons, I Samuel 2, 4
4. Saul, I Samuel 11-31

5. False prophets (examples)
 - a. Deut. 13:1-5 18:19-22 (ways to know a false prophet)
 - b. Jeremiah 28
 - c. Ezekiel 13:1-7
6. False prophetesses
 - a. Ezekiel 13:17
 - b. Nehemiah 6:14
7. Evil leaders of Israel (examples)
 - a. Jeremiah 5:30-31; 8:1-2; 23:1-4
 - b. Ezekiel 22:23-31
 - c. Micah 3:5-12

B. New Testament

1. This Greek term is literally *apostasize*. The Old and New Testaments both confirm an intensification of evil and false teaching before the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29,30; II Thess. 2:9-12; II Tim. 4:4). This Greek term may reflect Jesus' words in the Parable of the Soils found in Matthew 13; Mark 4; and Luke 8. These false teachers are obviously not Christians, but they came from within (cf. Acts 20:29-30; I John 2:19); however, they are able to seduce and capture immature believers (cf. Heb. 3:12).

The theological question is were the false teachers ever believers? This is difficult to answer because there were false teachers in the local churches (cf. I John 2:18-19). Often our theological or denominational traditions answer this question without reference to specific Bible texts (except the proof-text method of quoting a verse out of context to supposedly prove one's bias).

2. Apparent faith
 - a. Judas, John 17:12
 - b. Simon Magnus, Acts 8
 - c. Those spoken of in Matt. 7:13-23
 - d. Those spoken of in Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8
 - e. The Jews of John 8:31-59
 - f. Alexander and Hymenaeus, I Tim. 1:19-20
 - g. Those of I Tim. 6:21
 - h. Hymenaeus and Philetus, II Tim. 2:16-18
 - i. Demas, II Tim. 4:10
 - j. False teachers, II Peter 2:19-22; Jude vv. 12-19
 - k. antichrists, I John 2:18-19
3. Fruitless faith
 - a. I Corinthians 3:10-15
 - b. II Peter 1:8-11

We rarely think about these texts because our systematic theology (Calvinism, Arminianism, etc.) dictates the mandated response. Please do not pre-judge me because I bring up this subject. My concern is proper hermeneutical procedure. We must let the Bible speak to us and not try to mold it into a preset theology. This is often painful and shocking because much of our theology is denominational, cultural or

relational (parent, friend, pastor), not biblical. Some who are in the People of God turn out to not be in the People of God (e.g., Rom. 9:6).

11:22 “the kindness and severity of God” God’s ways always seem paradoxical to fallen humanity (cf. Isa. 55:8-11). There are consequences to our choices. God’s election does not negate mankind’s responsibility. The election of national Israel did not guarantee each individual’s salvation.

▣ **“if you continue in His kindness”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE with a PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE. This construction meant that believing Gentile continuance is conditional (this is the flip side of God’s sovereignty of Romans 9); we must be diligent to maintain our faith (cf. Phil. 2:12-13). This refers to the perseverance of both the group and the individual (cf. Gal. 6:9; Rev. 2:7,17; 3:6,13,22). This is the mystery and tension of corporality and individuality in the Bible. There are both promises (based on God’s character) and conditional covenants (based on human response). See Special Topic: The Need to Persevere at 8:25.

11:23 This verse follows the grammatical and theological pattern of v. 22. If the Jews repent and believe they will be included. If the Gentiles cease to believe, they will be rejected (cf. v. 20). Initial faith in Christ and continual faith in Him are crucial for both.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:25-32

²⁵For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery— so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; ²⁶and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.” ²⁷“THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.” ²⁸From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of *God’s* choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; ²⁹for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. ³²For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.

11:25 “I do not want you brethren, to be uninformed” This is a characteristic idiom of Paul’s (cf. 1:13; I Cor. 10:1; 12:1; II Cor. 1:8; I Thess. 4:13). It usually introduces significant discussion. It functions like Jesus’ initial “Amen, Amen.” Paul often uses it to signal a new topic.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “mystery”

TEV “a secret truth”

NJB “a hidden reason for all of this”

SPECIAL TOPIC: MYSTERY

God has a unified purpose for mankind’s redemption that even preceded the fall (cf. Genesis 3). Hints of this plan are revealed in the OT (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; and the universal passages in the prophets). However this full agenda was not clear (cf. I Cor. 2:6-8). With the coming of Jesus and the Spirit

it begins to become more obvious. Paul uses the term “mystery” to describe this total redemptive plan (cf. I Cor. 4:1; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; I Tim. 1:9). However, he uses it in several different senses:

1. A partial hardening of Israel to allow Gentiles to be included . This influx of Gentiles will work as a mechanism for Jews to accept Jesus as the Christ of prophecy (cf. Rom. 11:25-32).
2. The gospel was made known to the nations, which are all included in Christ and through Christ (cf. Rom. 16:25-27; Col. 2:2).
3. Believers’ new bodies at the Second Coming (cf. I Cor. 15:5-57; I Thess. 4:13-18).
4. The summing up of all things in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:8-11).
5. The Gentiles and Jews are fellow-heirs (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).
6. Intimacy of the relationship between Christ and the Church described in marriage terms (cf. Eph. 5:22-33).
7. Gentiles included in the covenant people and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ so as to produce Christlike maturity, that is, restore the marred image of God in fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 6:5,11-13; 8:21) of God in man (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6; Col. 1:26-28).
8. The end time Anti-Christ (cf. II Thess. 2:1-11).
9. An early church summary of the mystery is found in I Tim. 3:16.

▣ **“lest you be wise in your own estimation”** Here is another hint of the tension in the Roman church(s) (cf. v. 18).



NASB “that a partial hardening has happened to Israel”
NKJV “that a hardening in part has happened to Israel”
NRSV “a hardening has come upon part of Israel”
TEV “that the stubbornness of the people of Israel is not permanent”
NJB “One section of Israel has become blind”

This statement must be related to all of chapter 11. There have been and will continue to be some believing Jews. This partial blindness, instigated by God (vv. 8-10) because of the Jews’ rejection of Jesus, fits into God’s plan to redeem all mankind. God promised salvation to all (cf. Gen. 3:15). He chose Abraham to reach all (cf. Gen. 12:3). He chose Israel to reach all (cf. Exod. 19:5-6, see Special Topic at 8:28). Israel failed in her mission effort through pride, unfaithfulness and unbelief. God wanted to reach the Gentile world through His blessing of Israel (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29). Israel could not keep the Covenant, therefore, God’s temporal judgment fell on her. Now God has taken this very judgment and used it to fulfill His original purpose of the redemption of mankind through faith (cf. vv. 30-31; Ezek. 36:22-38).

▣ **“until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”** This same term (*pleroma*) is used in v. 12 for the Jews. Both verses speak of God’s foreknowledge and election. The “until” speaks of a time limit to this Gentile period (cf. Luke 21:24).

11:26 “all Israel will be saved” There are two possible interpretations.

1. This refers to national Israel—not every single individual Jew but the majority at a certain point in history.
2. This refers in some sense to spiritual Israel, the Church.

Paul used this concept in Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6. “The full quota of the Jews” in v. 12 and “the full quota of the Gentiles” in v. 25 are in a parallel relationship. It is “all” in the sense of God’s election not all in the sense of every individual. The olive tree of promise will one day be complete.

Some commentators say that this must refer to national Israel only because of

1. the context of chapters 9-11
2. the OT quotes in vv. 26-27
3. the clear statement in v. 28

God still has a love and desire for Abraham's natural seed to be saved! They must come through faith in Christ (Zech. 12:10).

The question of whether those Jews who were "hardened" will have an end time chance to respond cannot be answered from this or any text. As Americans we are culturally conditioned to ask individual questions but the Bible focuses on the corporate whole. All questions like this must be left to God. He will be just to His creation which He loves!

▣ **"as it is written"** This refers to two quotes from the Septuagint of Isa. 59:20-21(v. 26) and 27:9 (v. 27). The mechanism of salvation will be faith in Jesus the Messiah. There is no plan B, just plan A. There is only one way to be saved (cf. John 10:7-18; 11:25-29;14:6).

11:27 Isaiah 27:9, which is quoted in v. 27, combines the restoration of Israel to the Promised Land (vv. 1-11) with the invitation to the traditional enemy (Gentile nations) to be included (cf. vv. 12-13). If this restoration is literal then the millennium may fulfill this prophecy. If it is figurative, then the new covenant, the mystery of the gospel, in which Jew and Gentile are joined by faith in God's Messiah will be the goal (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). It is difficult to decide. Some OT prophecies are applied to the New Covenant church. Yet God is faithful to His promises, even when humans are not (cf. Ezek. 36:22-36).

11:28 This verse reflects the twin aspects of election.

1. in the OT election was for service; God chose human instrumentality for the purpose of redeeming humanity
2. in the NT election is linked to the gospel and eternal salvation; this salvation of all humans made in God's image has always been the goal (cf. Gen. 3:15)

God is faithful to His promises. This is true for the OT believers and NT saints. The key is God's faithfulness, not mankind's, God's mercy, not mankind's performance. Election is for the purpose of blessing, not of excluding!

▣ **"they are beloved for the sake of the fathers"** This is the promise of Exod. 20:5-6 and Deut. 5:9-10 and 7:9. Families are blessed because of the faith of previous generations. Israel was blessed because of faithful Patriarchs (cf. Deut. 4:37; 7:8; 10:15). That the Messiah would come from Judah was also a promise to David (cf. II Samuel 7). However, it must also be stated that even the "faithful" were unable to fully keep the Law (cf. Ezek. 36:22-36). Faith—personal faith, family faith, but not perfect faith—is acceptable to God and is potentially passed on through families (cf. I Cor. 7:8-16).

11:29

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

"for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable"

TEV

"For God does not change his mind about whom he chooses and blesses"

NJB

"God never takes back his gifts or revokes his choice"

This does not refer to spiritual gifts to individuals (cf. I Corinthians 12), but to God's promises of salvation, OT and NT. Election is effective. The faithfulness of God is the hope of national Israel (cf. Mal. 3:6) and spiritual Israel!

11:30-32 These verses are a summary of God’s plans and purposes.

1. They are always based on His mercy (see note at 9:15-16), not arbitrary determinism. The term “mercy” is used four times in this larger context (cf. 9:15,16,18,23).
2. God has judged all humans. Jews and Gentiles are all sinful (cf. 3:9,19,23; 5:11).
3. God has used mankind’s need and inability as an opportunity to show mercy to all humanity (cf. v. 22). Again in context “all” must be seen in light of vv. 12 and 25-26. Not all individuals will respond to God’s offer, but all are included in the scope of redemption (cf. 5:12-21; John 3:16). Oh, God, may it be so!!!

11:30 and 31 “but now” This strongly implies the spiritual conversion of national Israel by faith in Jesus (cf. Zech. 12:10). As the Gentiles’ “unbelief” has been overcome by the mercy of God, so will Jewish “unbelief.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:33-36

³³Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴FOR WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? ³⁵Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? ³⁶For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

11:33-36 This is one of Paul’s marvelous extemporaneous doxologies. Paul is overwhelmed by the ways of God: covenant faithfulness, covenant inclusion, covenant consummation.

11:33 “the riches” This is a favorite idiom for Paul (cf. 2:4; 9:23; 10:12; 11:12,33; Eph. 1:7,8; 2:7; 3:8,16; Phil. 4:19; Col. 1:27). The thrust of the gospel and the hope of mankind is the merciful abundance of God’s character and plan (cf. Isa. 55:1-7).

▣ **“How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways”** This is an appropriate doxology to the paradoxical truths of chapters 9-11 (cf. Isa. 55:8-11).

11:34 This is a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 40:13-14, where God delivers His people by bringing them back from exile. In I Cor. 2:16 Paul quotes this same passage but attributes the title, “Lord,” to Jesus.

11:35 This is a loose quote from Job 35:7 or 41:11.

11:36 “for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things” These phrases refer to God the Father in this context (cf. I Cor. 11:12), but are very similar to other NT passages which refer to God the Son (cf. I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 2:10). Paul affirms that all things issue from God and return to God.

▣ **“to Him be the glory forever”** This is a characteristic NT blessing on deity. It referred

1. sometimes to the Father (cf. 16:27; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; I Pet. 4:11; 5:11; Jude 25; Rev. 5:13; 7:12)
2. sometimes to the Son (cf. I Tim. 1:17; II Tim. 4:18; II Pet. 3:18; Rev. 1:16)

See full note at 3:23.

▣ **“Amen”** See Special Topic at 1:25.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How did Israel miss God's way of salvation?
2. What two reasons does Paul give to prove that God has not rejected Israel?
3. Why did God harden the Jews' hearts? How?
4. What is meant by the concept of a Jewish "remnant" (vv. 2-5)?
5. Define the term "mystery" in the NT.
6. What does 11:26 mean? Why? How is it related to 9:6?
7. What warning does Paul give to the Gentile believers (vv. 17-24)?

ROMANS 12

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The New Life in Christ	Living Sacrifices to God	The Consecrated Life	Life in God's Service	Spiritual Worship
12:1-2	12:1-8	12:1-2	12:1-2	12:1-2
				Humility and Charity
12:3-8		12:3-8	12:3-8	12:3-13
Rules of the Christian Life	Behave Like a Christian	Exhortations		
12:9-21	12:9-21	12:9-13	12:9-13	Charity to Everyone Including Enemies
		12:14-21	12:14-16	12:14-21
			12:17-21	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-8

- A. This begins the practical section of Romans (12:1-15:13). Paul's letters were occasional documents, therefore, they have both doctrinal and application sections. Paul wrote to address a local problem or crisis. Since Romans 1-8 is such a wonderful doctrinal summary, its ethical and practical section is equally powerful.
- B. Theology without lifestyle application is not of God (cf. Matt. 7:24-27; John 13:17; Rom. 2:13; James 1:22, 25; 2:14-26). Paul clearly teaches a free salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus, but this free gift is meant to radically change our lives! Salvation is free, but it must be followed by a radical Christlikeness! We dare not separate justification from sanctification!

- C. Verses 1-2 form an introduction to the entire practical section. It is the basis for the Spirit-led life (i.e., chapter 8).
- D. Verses 3-8 discuss spiritual giftedness. Our total yieldedness to Christ must issue in service for God (cf. Deut. 6:4-5; Matt. 22:37) and to others (cf. Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19). These gifts emphasize our unity in Christ and our diverse giftedness (cf. Eph. 4:1-10). Believers must strive for unity, not uniformity. We are equipped by God to serve each other (cf. I Cor. 12:7,11; Eph. 4:11-13)!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:1-2

¹Therefore I urge you, 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. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

▣ **“Therefore”** Paul used this term at significant transitional points in his presentation of gospel truths in the book of Romans.

1. in 5:1ff it summed up “justification by faith”
2. in 8:1ff it summed up believers’ relationship to sin, which was called sanctification
3. 12:1ff it relates to the practical outworking of justification and sanctification in believers’ daily lives

12:1

NASB	“I urge you”
NKJV	“I beseech you”
NRSV, TEV	“I appeal to you”
NJB	“I beg you”

This phrase is both tender and tough. It is a call to appropriate living. Paul often uses this term (cf. 12:1; 15:30; 16:17; I Cor. 1:10; 4:16; 16:15; II Cor. 2:8; 5:20; 6:1; 10:1; 12:8; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 4:2; I Thess. 4:10; I Tim. 1:3; Philemon vv. 9-10).

▣ **“brethren”** Paul often uses this term to introduce a new subject.

▣ **“by the mercies of God”** In the LXX this describes the compassionate nature of YHWH (cf. Exod. 34:6). Here it refers to the doctrinal progression of chapters 1-11. There is an obvious emphasis in Romans on the “mercy” (both *oikēirō* and *eleeō*) of God in dealing with fallen humanity (cf. 9:15,16,18,23; 11:30,31,32; 12:8; 15:9). Because God’s grace and mercy are offered freely, believers must live godly lives (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10) out of gratitude, not merit (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). The new lives (i.e., Col. 3:9,10,12) are meant to turn others to faith in Christ!

▣ **“to present”** This is an AORIST INFINITIVE. This was one of several sacrificial terms used in this context: sacrifice, v. 1; holy, v. 1; acceptable, v. 1. This same concept is expressed in 6:13,16,19. Humans will either give themselves to God or to Satan. As Christ gave Himself uniquely to do the Father’s will, even death on a cross, His followers must also emulate His selfless living (cf. II Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; I John 3:16).

▣ **“your bodies”** Christianity is different from so much of Greek philosophy, which thought the physical body was evil. It is the arena of temptation but it is morally neutral. The term “body” seems to parallel “mind” in v. 2. Believers need to commit their entire being to God (cf. Deut. 6:5; I Cor. 6:20) as they had previously committed it to sin (cf. Romans 6).

▣ **“a living”** This was radically different from the dead offerings of the Jewish or pagan temples (cf. 6:13; Gal. 2:20).

It must also be differentiated from asceticism (the harsh treatment of the physical body for religious purposes). It is not the body’s isolation, punishment or celibacy that is advocated, but an active life of service and Christlike love.

▣ **“and holy sacrifice”** The term “holy” means “set apart for God’s service.” The focus of this term in this context is on the believer’s consecration and availability to be used by God for His purposes.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY

I. The Old Testament

- A. The etymology of the term *kadosh* (BDB 872) is uncertain, possibly Canaanite. It is possible that part of the root (i.e., *kd*) means “to divide.” This is the source of the popular definition “separated (from Canaanite culture, cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19) for God’s use.”
- B. It relates to God’s presence in things, places, times, and persons. It is not used in Genesis, but becomes common in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.
- C. In the Prophetic literature (esp. Isaiah and Hosea) the personal element previously present, but not emphasized comes to the fore. It becomes a way of designating the essence of God (cf. Isa. 6:3). God is holy. His name representing His character is Holy. His people who are to reveal His character to a needy world are holy (if they obey the covenant in faith).
- D. God’s mercy and love are inseparable from the theological concepts of covenants, justice, and essential character. Herein is the tension in God toward an unholy, fallen, rebellious humanity. There is a very interesting article on the relationship between God as “merciful” and God as “holy” in Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 112-113.

II. The New Testament

- A. The writers of the NT (except Luke) are Hebrew thinkers, but are influenced by Koine Greek (i.e., the Septuagint). It is the Greek translation of the OT, not Classical Greek literature, thought, or religion that controls their vocabulary.
- B. Jesus is holy because He is of God and like God (cf. Luke 1:35; 4:34; Acts 3:14; 4:27,30). He is the Holy and Righteous One (cf. Acts 3:14; 22:14). Jesus is holy because He is sinless (cf. John 8:46; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 1:19; 2:22; I John 3:5).
- C. Because God is holy, His children are to be holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:16). Because Jesus is holy, His followers are to be holy (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). Christians are saved to serve in Christlikeness (holiness).

▣ **“acceptable to God”** This refers to an appropriate offering in the OT (cf. v. 2). This is similar to the concept of “blameless,” when used to refer to people (cf. Gen. 6:9; 17:1; Deut. 18:13; Job 1:1).



- NASB** “which is your spiritual service of worship”
- NKJV** “which is your reasonable service”
- NRSV** “which is your spiritual worship”
- TEV** “This is the true worship that you should offer.”
- NJB** “in a way that is worthy of thinking beings”

This term [*logikos*] is derived from *logizomai*, meaning “to reason” (cf. Mark 11:31; I Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:8). In this context it could mean rational or reasonable. But the term also was used in a sense of “spiritual,” as in I Pet. 2:2. The essence seems to be a conscious offering of one’s true self versus the dead or ritual offerings of dead sacrificial animals. God wants our lives in love and service to Him, not formalistic procedures that do not impact daily living.

12:2 “do not be conformed” This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE (or PERFECT MIDDLE) with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means to stop an act already in process. There is a contrast to v. 2 similar to the one in Phil. 2:6-8, between the outward changing form (*schema*, 2:8) and the inner unchanging essence (*morphe*, 2:6-7). Believers are exhorted not to continue to be like the changing, fallen world system (the old age of rebellion) of which they are still physically a part, but to be radically changed into Christlikeness (the new age of the Spirit).

☐ “to this world” This is literally the term “age.” The Jews saw two ages (cf. Matt. 12:32; Mark 10:30; Luke 20:34-35), the current evil age (cf. Gal. 1:4; II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2) and the age to come (cf. Matt. 28:20; Heb. 1:3; I John 2:15-17). Believers live in the tension-filled time in which these ages have surprisingly been overlapped. Because of the two comings of Christ, believers live in the “already and not yet” tension of the Kingdom of God as both present and yet future.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

The OT prophets viewed the future as an extension of the present. For them the future will be a restoration of geographical Israel. However, even they saw it as a new day (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22). With the continued willful rejection of YHWH by the descendants of Abraham (even after the exile) a new paradigm developed in Jewish intertestamental apocalyptic literature (i.e., I Enoch, IV Ezra, II Baruch). These writings begin to distinguish between two ages: a current evil age dominated by Satan and a coming age of righteousness dominated by the Spirit and inaugurated by the Messiah (often a dynamic warrior).

In this area of theology (eschatology) there is an obvious development. Theologians call this “progressive revelation.” The NT affirms this new cosmic reality of two ages (i.e., a temporal dualism).

<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Paul</u>	<u>Hebrews</u>
Matthew 12:32	Romans 12:2	1:2
Matthew 13:22 & 29	I Cor. 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18	6:5
Mark 10:30	II Cor. 4:4	11:3
Luke 16:8	Galatians 1:4	
Luke 18:30	Eph. 1:21; 2:1,7; 6:12	
Luke 20:34-35	I Timothy 6:17	
	II Timothy 4:10	
	Titus 2:12	

In NT theology these two Jewish ages have been overlapped because of the unexpected and overlooked predictions of the two comings of the Messiah. The incarnation of Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies of the inauguration of the new age (Dan. 2:44-45). However, the OT also saw His coming as Judge and Conqueror,

yet He came at first as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53; Zech. 12:10), humble and meek (cf. Zechariah 9:9). He will return in power just as the OT predicted (cf. Revelation 19). This two-stage fulfillment caused the Kingdom to be present (inaugurated), but future (not fully consummated). This is the NT tension of the already, but not yet!

▣ **“be transformed”** Believers must be transformed (cf. 6:4; 7:6; II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:10), not just informed! The grammatical form of this term can be PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE, “continue to transform yourselves” or PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE, “continue to be transformed.” This is also true of “conform” in v. 2a. For a similar contrast compare Ezek. 18:31 (human commitment and action) with Ezek 36:26-27 (divine gift). Both are needed!

A form of this same word for “formed” is used of Jesus at the Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:2), where His true essence was revealed. This true divine essence (cf. II Pet. 1:3-4) is to be formed in every believer (cf. II Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:13).

▣ **“by the renewing of your mind”** This is from the Greek root for new in quality (*kainos*) not new in time (*chronos*). For the Jews the senses of sight and hearing were the windows of the soul. What one thinks about, one becomes. After salvation, because of the indwelling Spirit, believers have a new perspective (cf. Eph. 4:13,23; Titus 3:5). This new biblical worldview, along with the indwelling Spirit, is what transforms the mind and lifestyle of new believers. Believers look at reality in a totally different way because their minds have been energized by the Spirit. A new redeemed, Spirit-led mind results in a new lifestyle! This is what the new covenant promised (cf. Jer. 31:31-34).

SPECIAL TOPIC: RENEW (*ANAKAINŌSIS*)

This Greek term in its various forms (*anakainoō*, *anakainizō*) has two basic meanings.

1. “to cause something to become new and different (i.e., better)” – Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:10
2. “to cause a change to a previous preferable state” – II Cor. 4:16; Heb. 6:4-6

(taken from Louw and Nida’s *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, pp. 157, 594)

Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, say that this term (i.e., *anakkainōsis*) cannot be found in Greek literature earlier than Paul. Paul may have coined this term himself (p. 34).

Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology*, has an interesting comment.

“Regeneration and renewal belong to God alone. *Anakkainōsis*, the word for “renewal,” is an action noun, and it is employed in the New Testament, along with verb forms, to describe a continuing renewal, as in Romans 12:2, ‘Be ye transformed according to the renewing of your mind’ and 2 Corinthians 4:16, ‘Our inward man is being renewed day by day.’ Colossians 3:10 describes the ‘new man’ as ‘the one being renewed unto thorough knowledge according to the image of the one having created him.’ Thus the ‘new man,’ the ‘newness of life,’ the ‘regeneration,’ or ‘renewal,’ however designated, is traced to an initial act and a continuing act of God as the giver and sustainer of eternal life” (p. 118).

▣ **“that you may prove what the will of God is”** This is a PRESENT INFINITIVE. The word (*dokimazō*) is used with the connotation of “to test with a view toward approval.” See Special Topic at 2:18.

The will of God is that all be saved through Christ (cf. John 6:39-40), and then live like Christ (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 4:13,15; 5:17-18). Christian assurance (see special Topic at 5:2) is based on

1. the promises of a trustworthy God

2. the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:14-16)
3. believer's changed and changing life (cf. James & I John) "no fruit, no root" (cf. Matt. 13:1-9, 19-23)

▣ "what the will of God is" See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILL (*thelēma*) OF GOD

JOHN'S GOSPEL

- Jesus came to do the Father's will (cf. 4:34; 5:30; 6:38)
- to raise up on the last day all whom the Father gave the Son (cf. 6:39)
- that all believe in the Son (cf. 6:29,40)
- answered prayer related to doing God's will (cf. 9:31 and I John 5:14)

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

- doing God's will is crucial (cf. Matt. 7:21)
- doing God's will makes one brother and sister with Jesus (cf. Matt. 12:50; Mark 3:35)
- it is not God's will for any to perish (cf. Matt. 18:14; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9)
- Calvary was the Father's will for Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:42; Luke 22:42)

PAUL'S LETTERS

- the maturity and service of all believers (cf. Rom. 12:1-2)
- believers delivered from this evil age (cf. Gal. 1:4)
- God's will was His redemptive plan (cf. Eph. 1:5,9,11)
- believers experiencing and living the Spirit-filled life (cf. Eph. 5:17-18)
- believers filled with the knowledge of God (cf. Col. 1:9)
- believers made perfect and complete (cf. Col. 4:12)
- believers sanctified (cf. I Thess. 4:3)
- believers giving thanks in all things (cf. I Thess. 5:18)

PETER'S LETTERS

- believers doing right (i.e., submitting to civil authorities) and thereby silencing foolish men, providing an opportunity for evangelism (cf. I Pet. 2:15)
- believers suffering (cf. I Pet. 3:17; 4:19)
- believers not living self-centered lives (cf. I Pet. 4:2)

JOHN'S LETTERS

- believers abiding forever (cf. I John 2:17)
- believers key to answered prayer (cf. I John 5:14)

▣ "that which is good and acceptable and perfect" These represent God's will for believers after salvation (cf. Phil. 4:4-9). God's goal for every believer is Christlike maturity now (cf. Matt. 5:48).

▣ "perfect" This term means "mature, fully equipped to accomplish an assigned task," "ripe" or "complete." It does not mean "sinless." It was used of

1. arms and legs that had been broken but were healed and restored to usefulness
2. fishing nets that had torn but were mended and useful for catching fish again
3. baby chickens now old enough to go to market as fryers
4. ships rigged for sailing

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:3-8

³For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to 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. ⁴For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;⁷if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;⁸or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

12:3 Verses 1-2 accentuate the need for a “new mind.” In v. 3 there is a fourfold play on the word “think.” In *The Zondervan Study Guide Commentary, Romans*, Bruce Corley and Curtis Vaughan make this observation:

“Exaggerated thinking. . .proper thinking. . .purposeful thinking. . .sober thinking” (p. 138).

This characterization is helpful.

This verse, like 11:13-24, may reflect

1. the tension in the church of Rome between believing Jews and believing Gentiles
2. the fact that Paul wrote Romans from Corinth (at the end of his third missionary journey), where he encountered arrogant, self-flaunting believers

▣ **“For through the grace given to me”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. The grace came from God in a past, complete event (i.e., the Damascus road encounter). In this context “grace” related to spiritual giftedness (cf. 15:15; I Cor. 3:10; 15:10; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 3:7-8), not the gift of righteousness (cf. Romans 4). This refers to Paul’s conversion and call to be apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:1,5; Gal. 1:15-16; 2:7-8; Eph. 3:1-2,8; I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 4:17).

▣ **“I say to everyone among you”** The warning of v. 3 is for all Christians, not just leaders.

▣ **“not to think more highly of himself”** See Special Topic: Paul’s Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1:30.

▣ **“as God has allotted to each”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE. Believers do not choose their spiritual gifts (cf. I Cor. 7:17; 12:11; Eph. 4:7). They are given by the Spirit at salvation for the common good (cf. I Cor. 12:7). The gifts of the Spirit are not merit badges which exalt the individual, but servant towels so that each believer may serve the body of Christ, the church.

▣ **“a measure of faith”** This referred to one’s ability to function effectively in their spiritual giftedness (cf. v. 6). To be healthy, spiritual giftedness must be exercised by means of the fruit of the Spirit (cf. vv. 9-12; Gal. 5:22-23). The gifts are the ministries of Jesus divided among His followers, while the fruit is the mind of Christ. Both are necessary for effective ministry.

12:4 This is a common metaphor in Paul’s writings. The human body’s interdependence describes the church’s giftedness (cf. I Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:23; 4:4,12,16; 5:30; Col. 1:18,24; 2:19). Christianity is corporate and individual!

12:5 “we, who are many, are one body in Christ” This verse emphasizes believers’ unity and diversity. This is the tension of spiritual giftedness within the church. The love chapter of I Corinthians 13 discusses the tension of the diversity of giftedness (cf. I Cor. 12 and 14). Christians are not in competition, but in Great Commission cooperation!

12:6-8 These verses form one sentence in Greek with two PARTICIPLES but no main VERB. It is usually translated as a THIRD PERSON IMPERATIVE, “let us use.”

12:6 “gifts. . .grace” The terms “gifts” (*charismata*) and “grace” (*charis*) have the same Greek word root, which means “freely given.” See note at 3:24. The gifts of the Spirit are listed in I Corinthians 12; Romans 12; Ephesians 4 and I Peter 4. The lists and their order are not identical, therefore, they must be representative, not exhaustive. The Bible never informs believers how to identify their spiritual gift(s). The best non-biblical Christian wisdom on this issue is found in the principles contained in the InterVarsity Press’ booklet by Paul Little called *Affirming the Will of God*. These same guidelines for knowing God’s will function in knowing one’s area of effective service. Apparently knowing that believers are gifted is more important than identifying how they are gifted or which specific gift they have been given.

▣ **“if”** This is *eite* (cf. vv. 6,7 [twice], 8), which is translated “if. . .if” or “whether. . .whether” in meaning. It is followed by no VERB in this verse (cf. I Cor. 3:22; 8:5; II Cor. 5:10), but often is followed by a PRESENT INDICATIVE (cf. I Cor. 12:26; II Cor. 1:6) and is, therefore, a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which assumes the existence of these spiritual gifts.

▣ **“prophecy”** This does not relate to OT prophecy as revelatory (inspired) messages from God. In the OT prophets wrote Scripture (inspiration). In the NT it is the act of proclaiming God’s truth. It can also involve prediction (cf. Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11). The focus is not on new content but explaining the gospel message and how it applies today. There is a fluidity in the term. It can refer to a function exercised by believers, (cf. I Cor. 14:1,39) and a specific spiritual gift (cf. I Cor. 12:28; 14:29; Eph. 4:11). This same fluidity can be seen in Paul’s Corinthian letters which were written about the same time (cf. I Cor. 12:10,12; 13:8; 14:1, 5,29,39).

SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY

- I. It is not the same as OT prophecy (BDB 611), which has the rabbinical connotation of inspired revelations from YHWH (cf. Acts 3:18,21; Rom. 16:26). Only prophets could write Scripture.
 - A. Moses was called a prophet (cf. Deut. 18:15-21).
 - B. History books (Joshua - Kings [except Ruth]) were called the “former prophets” (cf. Acts 3:24).
 - C. Prophets usurp the place of High Priest as the source of information from God (cf. Isaiah - Malachi)
 - D. The second division of the Hebrew canon is “the Prophets” (cf. Matt. 5:17; 22:40; Luke 16:16; 24:25,27; Rom. 3:21).
- II. In the NT the concept is used in several different ways.
 - A. referring to OT prophets and their inspired message (cf. Matt. 2:23; 5:12; 11:13; 13:14; Rom. 1:2)
 - B. referring to a message for an individual rather than a corporate group (i.e., OT prophets spoke primarily to Israel)
 - C. referring to both John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 11:9; 14:5; 21:26; Luke 1:76) and Jesus as proclaimers of the Kingdom of God (cf. Matt. 13:57; 21:11,46; Luke 4:24; 7:16; 13:33; 24:19). Jesus also claimed to be greater than the prophets (cf. Matt. 11:9; 12:41; Luke 7:26).
 - D. other prophets in the NT
 1. early life of Jesus as recorded in Luke’s Gospel (i.e., Mary’s memories)
 - a. Elizabeth (cf. Luke 1:41-42)

- b. Zacharias (cf. Luke 1:67-79)
 - c. Simeon (cf. Luke 2:25-35)
 - d. Anna (cf. Luke 2:36)
 - 2. ironic predictions (cf. Caiaphas, John 11:51)
 - E. referring to one who proclaims the gospel (the lists of proclaiming gifts in I Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11)
 - F. referring to an ongoing gift in the church (cf. Matt. 23:34; Acts 13:1; 15:32; Rom. 12:6; I Cor. 12:10,28-29; 13:2; Eph. 4:11). Sometimes this can refer to women (cf. Luke 2:36; Acts 2:17; 21:9; I Cor. 11:4-5).
 - G. referring to the apocalyptic book of Revelation (cf. Rev. 1:3; 22:7,10,18,19)
- III. NT prophets
- A. They do not give inspired revelation in the same sense as did the OT prophets (i.e., Scripture). This statement is possible because of the use of the phrase “the faith” (i.e., a sense of a completed gospel) used in Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Gal. 1:23; 3:23; 6:10; Phil. 1:27; Jude 3,20.

This concept is clear from the full phrase used in Jude 3, “the faith once and for all handed down to the saints.” The “once for all” faith refers to the truths, doctrines, concepts, world-view teachings of Christianity. This once-given emphasis is the biblical basis for theologically limiting inspiration to the writings of the NT and not allowing later or other writings to be considered revelatory. There are many ambiguous, uncertain, and grey areas in the NT, but believers affirm by faith that everything that is “needed” for faith and practice is included with sufficient clarity in the NT. This concept has been delineated in what is called “the revelatory triangle

 - 1. God has revealed Himself in time-space history (REVELATION)
 - 2. He has chosen certain human writers to document and explain His acts (INSPIRATION)
 - 3. He has given His Spirit to open the minds and hearts of humans to understand these writings, not definitively, but adequately for salvation and an effective Christian life (ILLUMINATION). The point of this is that inspiration is limited to the writers of Scripture. There are no further authoritative writings, visions, or revelations. The canon is closed. We have all the truth we need to respond appropriately to God. This truth is best seen in the agreement of biblical writers versus the disagreement of sincere, godly believers. No modern writer or speaker has the level of divine leadership that the writers of Scripture did.
 - B. In some ways NT prophets are similar to OT prophets.
 - 1. prediction of future events (cf. Paul, Acts 27:22; Agabus, Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11; other unnamed prophets, Acts 20:23)
 - 2. proclaim judgment (cf. Paul, Acts 13:11; 28:25-28)
 - 3. symbolic acts which vividly portray an event (cf. Agabus, Acts 21:11)
 - C. They do proclaim the truths of the gospel sometimes in predictive ways (cf. Acts 11:27-28; 20:23; 21:10-11), but this is not the primary focus. Prophesying in I Corinthians is basically communicating the gospel (cf. 14:24,39).
 - D. They are the Spirit’s contemporary means of revealing the contemporary and practical applications of God’s truth to each new situation, culture, or time period (cf. I Cor. 14:3).

E. They were active in the early Pauline churches (cf. I Cor. 11:4-5; 12:28,29; 13:29; 14:1,3,4,5,6,22,24,29,31, 32,37,39; Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; I Thess. 5:20) and are mentioned in the *Didache* (written in the late first century or in the second century, date uncertain) and in Montanism of the second and third centuries in northern Africa.

IV. Have the NT gifts ceased?

- A. This question is difficult to answer. It helps to clarify the issue by defining the purpose of the gifts. Are they meant to confirm the initial preaching of the gospel or are they ongoing ways for the church to minister to itself and a lost world?
- B. Does one look at the history of the church to answer the question or the NT itself? There is no indication in the NT that the spiritual gifts were temporary. Those who try to use I Cor. 13:8-13 to address this issue abuse the authorial intent of the passage, which asserts that everything but love will pass away.
- C. I am tempted to say that since the NT, not church history, is the authority, believers must affirm that the gifts continue. However, I believe that culture affects interpretation. Some very clear texts are no longer applicable (i.e., the holy kiss, women wearing veils, churches meeting in homes, etc). If culture affects texts, then why not church history?
- D. This is simply a question that cannot be definitively answered. Some believers will advocate “cessation” and others “non-cessation.” In this area, as in many interpretative issues, the heart of the believer is the key. The NT is ambiguous and cultural. The difficulty is being able to decide which texts are affected by culture/history and which are for all time and all cultures (cf. Fee and Stuart’s *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 14-19 and 69-77). Here is where the discussions of freedom and responsibility, which are found in Rom. 14:1-15:13 and I Cor. 8-10, are crucial. How we answer the question is important in two ways.
1. Each believer must walk in faith in the light they have. God looks at our heart and motives.
 2. Each believer must allow other believers to walk in their faith understanding. There must be tolerance within biblical bounds. God wants us to love one another as He does.
- E. To sum up the issue, Christianity is a life of faith and love, not a perfect theology. A relationship with Him which impacts our relationship with others is more important than definitive information or creedal perfection.

☐ **“according to the proportion of his faith”** This relates directly to v. 3, “as God has allotted to each a measure of faith” (cf. Eph. 4:7). It must also relate to the larger context which has to do with how believers use their giftedness. This relates to believers’ attitudes, motives, and energy in functioning in their God-given personal ministries, which are basically the fruit of the Spirit listed in Gal. 5:22-23.

12:7

NASB “if service”

NKJV, NRSV “or ministry, let us use it in our ministry”

TEV “if it is to serve, we should serve.”

NJB “if administration, then use it for administration”

Modern translations differ because there is no exact English equivalent to this Greek term (*diakonia*). It can mean (1) practical service or (2) administration (cf. Acts 6:1; I Cor. 12:5,28). *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* by Harold K Moulton, defines it as “a function, ministry, or office” in Rom. 12:7; I Cor. 12:5; Col. 4:17; II Tim. 4:5” (p. 92). The contextual focus is on helping other believers.

▣ **“teachers. . .teaching”** This gift (*didaskō*) is listed in I Cor. 12:28 and 14:26. It is linked with prophets in Acts 13:1 and with pastors in Eph. 4:11. The early church saw these as gifted people functioning in overlapping ways. Preaching, prophesying, evangelizing, and teaching all proclaim the gospel, but with different emphases and methodologies.

12:8 “exhorts. . .exhortation” This term (*parakaleō*) is related to teaching (cf. I Timothy 4:13). Possibly it is the skill by which truth is applied to life. It then would relate to Eph. 4:15,16 “speaking the truth in love. . .the body building itself up in love.”

▣ **“he who gives, with liberality”** See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GENEROUS/SINCERE (*HAPLOTES*)

This term (*haplotes*) had two connotations, “generous” or “sincere.” It was a metaphor related to vision. In the OT the eye was used as a metaphor for motive in two ways.

1. evil eye (stingy, cf. Deut. 15:9 and Pro. 23:6; 28:22)
2. good eye (generous, cf. Pro. 22:9)

Jesus followed this usage (cf. Matt. 6:22-23; 20:15). Paul uses this term in two senses.

1. “simplicity, sincerity, purity” (cf. II Cor. 1:12; 11:3; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22)
2. “liberality” (cf. Rom. 12:8; II Cor. 8:2; 9:11,13)

▣ **“he who leads, with diligence”** This refers to Christian leadership, either itinerant or local.

▣ **“he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness”** This refers to helping the sick and needy. There should be no distinction between the doctrinal preaching and social concerns of the believing community. They are two sides of one coin. There is no “social gospel,” just gospel!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS TO VERSES 1-8

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is involved in presenting your body as a living sacrifice (v. 1)?
2. Does every believer have a spiritual gift (vv. 3-8; I Cor. 12:7)? If so, does he or she pick which one they want?
3. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?
4. Is there an exhaustive list of gifts in the Bible?
5. How does one identify his gift?

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 9-21

- A. This section could best be entitled “Christian Guidelines for Interpersonal Relationships.” This is a practical discussion of love (cf. Matt. 5-7; I Cor. 13 and I John 3:18; 4:7-21).
- B. Chapter 12 of Romans is very similar in content and structure to I Corinthians 12-13. Immediately after the discussion of spiritual gifts comes a warning about pride and an emphasis on practical lifestyle love.
- C. The context deals with
 1. our relations with other Christians (cf. 12:9-13). This is also discussed in detail in 14:1-15:13 and in I Cor. 8:11ff; 10:23-33
 2. our relations with unbelievers or even more probably, other Christians with whom there is a conflict (cf. 12:14-21). This section seems to reflect Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5-7).
 3. this division of the passage is somewhat artificial because these areas (relationships) overlap
- D. This passage is dominated by ongoing, lifestyle commands (PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVES, cf. v. 4 [thrice], 16, 20 [twice], 21 [twice] and by PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLES used in the sense of IMPERATIVES seventeen times). Salvation is a free gift of the grace of God through the finished work of Christ and the wooing of the Spirit, but once received, it is a costs-everything commitment and lifestyle! Calling Jesus “Lord” is not a metaphor (cf. Luke 6:46)!
- E. This passage also has several PRESENT PARTICIPLES used in the sense of IMPERATIVES with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means to stop an act already in process, vv. 14, 16 (twice), 17, 19 and 21. Christians were already living out of bounds! In one sense sin can be defined as taking God’s gifts beyond their God-given bounds.
- F. Christianity must be “open”— open-minded, open-handed, open-hearted and open-doored (cf. James 2).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:9-13

⁹Let love *be* without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰*Be* devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹²rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

12:9 “Let love *be* without hypocrisy” In the Greek text there were no linking words (*asyndeton*) in this context which was very unusual in Koine Greek. It might reflect the Hebrew grammatical form behind the Beatitudes of Matthew 5. This grammatical form would emphasize each one of the phrases as a stand-alone truth.

“Hypocrisy” was a theatrical term for “speaking behind a mask.” Love must not be play acting or counterfeit (cf. II Cor. 6:6). Love is the characteristic of believers (cf. John 13:34-35; 15:12,17; I John 3:11,18; 4:7-21) because it is the character of God.

▣ **“abhor what is evil”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. Believers need to be surprised and revolted by evil (cf. I Thess. 5:21-22). Often we are only surprised by the consequences that directly impact our lives.



NASB, NKJV “cling to what is good”
NRSV “hold fast to what is good”
TEV “hold on to what is good”
NJB “stick to what is good”

This is a PRESENT PASSIVE (but used in a MIDDLE sense) PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE—“be glued to” (cf. LXX of Gen. 2:24; Acts 8:29 and also Phil. 4:8; I Thess. 5:21-22). Notice the necessity of diligence and perseverance!

12:10

NASB “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love”
NKJV “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love”
NRSV “Love one another with mutual affection”
TEV “Love one another warmly as Christians”
NJB “Love each other as much as brothers should”

This was a compound Greek term (*phileo + storge*) combining “brotherly love” with “family love” and is used only here in the NT. Christians are a family. We are commanded to love one another (cf. I Thess. 4:9).

This is the first of a series of DATIVES which were placed first in the Greek sentence for emphasis.



NASB “give preference to one another in honor”
NKJV “in honor giving preference to one another”
NRSV “outdo one another in showing honor”
TEV “and be eager to show respect for one another”
NJB “have a profound respect for each other”

This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. Believers must treat other covenant partners as more important than themselves (cf. Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3).

12:11

NASB “not lagging behind in diligence”
NKJV “not lagging in diligence”
NRSV “do not lag in zeal”
TEV “work hard and do not be lazy”
NJB “work for the Lord with untiring effort”

True love produces great energy (cf. Gal. 6:9).



NASB, NKJV “fervent in spirit”
NRSV “ardent in spirit”
TEV “with a heart full of devotion”
NJB “with great earnestness of spirit”

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. It is literally “to boil.” This could refer to the regenerated human spirit or the indwelling Holy Spirit (RSV, cf. Acts 18:25; Rev. 3:15-16).

▣ **“serving the Lord”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. There is a manuscript variation here. Some of the western family of Greek manuscripts (MSS D^{*3}, F, and G) read “in time” (*kairos*) instead of “in the Lord” (*kurios*). The variant would emphasize serving the Lord and His church as the opportunity arises (cf. John 9:4; Eph. 5:16).

In all probability the confusion occurred because *kurios* was misunderstood or misread. The best and oldest Greek manuscripts P⁴⁶, \aleph , A, and B have “serving the Lord.” The UBS⁴ rates “Lord” as “certain” (A).

12:12 “rejoicing in hope” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE (cf. 5:2).

The term “hope” was often used in connection with the Second Coming (cf. 5:2; 8:24; 15:13; I Thess. 5:8). It is not hope in the English sense of a wish, but in the NT sense of a certain event, but with an ambiguous time element. See full notes at 4:18 and 5:2.

▣ **“persevering”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. The term means “active, voluntary, steadfast endurance.”

▣ **“in tribulation”** As in 5:3,5 “hope” was linked to tribulation (*thlipsis*). This is the norm for followers of Christ in a fallen world (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 16:1-3; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; II Cor. 4:16-18; 6:3-10; 11:23-30; Phil. 1:29; I Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 3:12; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 4:12-16). We must not seek it nor shun it! See Special Topic: Tribulations at 5:3.

▣ **“devoted to prayer”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. Prayer is a spiritual discipline and gift that recognizes God’s active hand in history. Believers can affect a loving Heavenly Father. God has chosen to limit Himself to the prayers of His children (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4; Eph. 6:18-19; Col. 4:2). This makes prayer an awesome responsibility. See *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare* by Clinton Arnold, pp. 43-44, 187-188.

12:13

NASB, NRSV **“contributing to the needs of the saints”**

NKJV **“distributing to the needs of the saints”**

TEV **“share your belongings with your needy fellow Christians”**

NJB **“share with any of God’s holy people who are in need”**

The Greek VERB *koinōneō* means “fellowship with.” This term has a wide range of meaning for Paul. It includes both fellowship in the gospel and physical needs (cf. Gal. 6:6). It is even used of sharing Christ’s suffering (cf. Phil. 3:8-10; I Pet. 4:13) and Paul’s (cf. Phil. 4:14). To be united with Christ meant to be united with His people at every level! See Special Topic: Saints at 1:7.

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE (cf. Pro. 3:27; Gal. 6:10). Believers are to work hard so as to have more for others, in Jesus’ name (cf. II Cor. 8:11-12; Eph. 4:28).

SPECIAL TOPIC: *KOINŌNIA*

The term “fellowship” (*koinōnia*) means

1. close association with a person
 - a. with the Son (cf. I John 1:6; I Cor. 1:9)
 - b. with the Spirit (cf. II Cor. 13:13; Phil. 2:1)
 - c. with the Father and the Son (cf. I John 1:3)
 - d. with other covenant brothers/sisters (cf. I John 1:7; Acts 2:42; Gal. 2:9; Philemon 17)
2. close association with things or groups
 - a. with the gospel (cf. Phil. 1:5; Philemon 6)
 - b. with the blood of Christ (cf. I Cor. 10:16)
 - c. not with darkness (cf. II Cor. 6:14)
 - d. with suffering (cf. Phil. 3:10; 4:14; I Pet. 4:13)
3. gift or contribution done in generous fashion (cf. Rom. 12:13; 15:26; II Cor. 8:4; 9:13; Phil. 4:15; Heb. 13:16)
4. God’s gift of grace through Christ, which restores mankind’s fellowship with Him and his brothers and sisters

This asserts the horizontal relationship (human to human) that is brought about by the vertical relationship (human to Creator). It also emphasizes the need for and joy of Christian community. The verb tense stresses the start and continuance of this experience of community (cf. 1:3 [twice], 6,7). Christianity is corporate!

▣ **“practicing hospitality”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. It is literally “pursuing hospitality” (see note at 14:19, cf. I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; Heb. 13:2; I Pet. 4:9). This ministry was extremely important in the early church because of the evil reputation of “inns.” This primarily referred to the housing and feeding itinerant Christian ministers.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:14-21

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. ¹⁷Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. ²⁰“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 ON HIS HEAD.” ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

12:14 “bless those who persecute you” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE used twice in this verse. We get the English term “eulogy” from this term, “bless” (cf. Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:28; I Cor. 4:12; James 3:9-12; I Pet. 3:9). In P⁴⁶ (The Chester Beatty Papyri) and manuscript B (Vaticanus), “you” is left out making the statement much more inclusive or to put it another way, a much more general statement. For “persecute” see note at 14:9.

▣ **“do not curse”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means to stop an act already in process. This refers to calling God’s name in prayer for vengeance (similar to the curses of I Cor. 12:3). This does not refer to profanity (cf. Eph. 4:29; I Pet. 3:9).

12:15 “rejoice with those people who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” These two PRESENT INFINITIVES are used in the sense of IMPERATIVES. Christians are a family. Believers are not in competition, but must treat each other in family love. Because of the context of vv. 14-21 it is even possible that this reflects the believer’s response to the unbelieving community using cultural opportunities or circumstances for evangelistic opportunities.

12:16

NASB, NKJV “Be of the same mind toward one another”

NRSV “Live in harmony with one another”

TEV “Have the same concern for everyone”

NJB “Treat everyone with equal kindness”

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE (cf. 15:5; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2). Verse 16 may be viewed in relation to the conflict between

1. believing Jews and believing Gentiles in the Roman Church (cf. 11:13-24)
2. the age-old conflict between economic classes
3. the differing spiritual gifts
4. generational traditions and personal preferences

▣ **“do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means to stop an act already in process.

The term “lowly” can be MASCULINE or NEUTER. If it is NEUTER then the translation should read “accept humble duties”; if MASCULINE, “associate with poor or humble people.”

▣ **“Do not be wise in your own estimation”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act already in process (cf. Pro. 3:7; Isa. 5:21; I Cor. 10:12; Gal. 6:3). Believers must not act superior to each other or arrogantly toward the unbelieving community.

12:17 “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which meant stop an act already in process. It is up to God to set things straight, not believers (cf. Pro. 20:22; 24:29; Matt. 5:38-48; Luke 6:27; I Thess. 5:15; I Pet. 3:9).

▣ **“Respect what is right in the sight of all men”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE (cf. II Cor. 8:21; I Thess. 5:22; and I Tim. 3:7). This may be an allusion to Pro. 3:4 in the Septuagint (LXX). Believers live with an eye toward evangelizing unbelievers. We should do nothing that would offend or alienate an unbeliever (cf. I Cor. 9:19-23). Even our deepest convictions must be expressed in loving ways.

12:18 “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. It is followed in the next clause by a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. This is not always the believer’s choice, but the grammar implies that it is often possible (cf. Mark 9:50; II Cor. 13:11; I Thess. 5:13).

12:19 “Never take your own revenge” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE, which usually means stop an act already in process. God will set it straight one day (cf. Lev. 19:18; Deut. 32:35; Heb. 10:30).

▣ **“for it is written”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, which is a Semitic idiomatic way of referring to inspired Scripture. This idiom of inspiration is paralleled to “as the Lord says” (cf. I Cor. 14:21 and II Cor. 6:17). This is a quote from Deut. 32:35.

12:20 “But if your enemy” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which meant potential future action. Enemies will come!

▣ **“heap burning coals on his head”** This is an allusion to Pro. 25:21-22. The theories of interpretation are:

1. This was a cultural idiom possibly from Egypt which meant that kindness is the best way to turn an enemy into a friend. It is still the Christian response to entrenched evil (cf. Matt. 5:44).
2. “Burning coals” seem to represent shame at one’s improper actions which are so clearly revealed in light of another’s love and forgiveness (cf. Ambrosiaster, Augustine and Jerome).
3. Origen and Chrysostom said this refers to Christian kindness which causes God to judge even more severely the unrepentant (cf. the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 326).

All the above theories are only that. The key is in Paul’s summary statement in v. 21.

12:21 “Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good” This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE and PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Our response to unfair treatment will determine and reflect the level of our own inner peace and joy. Bitterness is a spiritual cancer. Believers must give it to God.

▣ **“evil”** This is either MASCULINE and, therefore, a reference to the evil one (see Special Topic at 16:20), or it could be NEUTER and refer to evil in general (cf. 12:9; I Thess. 5:21-22). This is a common NT ambiguity (cf. Matt. 5:37; 6:13; 13:19,28; John 17:15; II Thess. 3:3; I John 2:13-14; 3:12; 5:18-19).

It must be remembered that the purpose of these new attitudes and actions is evangelism!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR VERSES 9-21

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why are there so many PRESENT IMPERATIVES with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE in vv. 9-21?
2. List all of the commands in these verses separately in a column. They are an awesome list of what practical, daily Christlikeness involves!
3. Why is it so difficult to determine which verses refer to Christians’ treatment of other believers and which refer to their treatment of unbelievers?

ROMANS 13

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Obedience to Rules	Submit to Government	The Christian and the State	Duties Toward State Authorities	Submission to Civil Authority
13:1-7	13:1-7	13:1-7	13:1-5 13:6-7	13:1-7
Brotherly Love	Love Your Neighbor	Love Fulfills the Law	Duties Toward One Another	Love and War
13:8-10	13:8-10	13:8-10	13:8-10	13:8-10
The Approach of the Day of Christ	Put on Christ	The Imminence of Christ's Second Coming		Children of the Light
13:11-14	13:11-14	13:11-14	13:11-13 13:14	13:11-14

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-7

- A. As chapter 12 dealt primarily with the Christian and his fellow believers (vv. 9-13) and others in society (vv. 14-21), chapter 13:1-7 deals primarily with the Christian and the civil government. However, there is no contextual division between these subjects. Paul saw them as one. There is no sacred and secular dichotomy. All of life belongs to God. Believers are stewards in every area! The link between these two chapters may be seen in 12:18.

B. Believers' understanding of the place of civil government has been varied. In the OT government develops within the line of Cain (cf. Gen. 4:16-22). The tower of Babel (cf. Gen. 11) is related to mankind's attempt at self rule apart from God. The kingship within Israel was meant to be God's reign through divine law and through a designated under-shepherd (the King), but it was not successful because of mankind's sin. Jesus' discussion of the proper place of government in Matt. 22:21 and Mark 12:17 is pivotal. It is surprising that Paul does not make mention of Jesus' words in this context (although vv. 1-7 and 11 seem to parallel Matt. 22:15-22 and 39). There is a proper God-given role for government in a fallen world. Often the Apostles were forced into struggling with how to relate to authority, both civil and religious. It proves to be a positive and negative task depending on the actions of the human authority. Paul was both protected and persecuted by government. However, John, in the Revelation, speaks of government as the Great Whore (cf. Rev. 17)!

We must support government unless it violates our Spirit-led consciences or demands ultimate allegiance. Civil order is preferable to chaos (cf. II Thess. 2:6-7).

C. This same subject is dealt with in Titus 3:1 and I Peter 2:13-17.

D. Judaism was a legal religion under the Roman government of the first century. Christianity was considered a sect within it for many years (cf. Acts 18:12-16). This afforded legal protection to the missionary movement in these early years. One purpose of Acts was to show that Christianity was not a political threat to Rome. Rome provided an international peace and stability (*pax Romana*) in which the gospel spread (cf. I Tim. 2:1-2).

E. This passage is intensified in the light of Paul's personal experiences with the authorities. It is also possible that this section was included because

1. of the tensions within the Roman church related to governmental edicts (e.g., restricting Jewish rituals). This may have caused some believing Jews to leave the capital (e.g., Aquila and Priscilla, cf. Acts 18:2). In their absence believing Gentile leadership developed.
2. of the tensions in Rome caused by the preaching of the gospel in the large Jewish community of Rome. The historian Suetonius, *Life of Claudius* 25.2, records that the Emperor exiled the Jews from the capital in A.D. 49 because of recurrent rioting caused by a "Chrestus." This may be a variant spelling in Latin of Christ (Christos).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:1-7

¹Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ²Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. ⁵Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. ⁶For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

13:1 “Every person is to be in subjection” This is (1) a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE meaning, “continue to be made submissive” or (2) PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE, “submit himself/herself” (cf. Titus 3:1; I Pet. 2:13). “Submit” was a military term used to describe a chain of command. Paul is addressing all believers. Paul asserts that believers should be subject to one another (cf. Eph. 5:21).

In our day submission seems like a negative term. It is a word that depicts both a humility and a profound understanding of God’s world and our place in it. Jesus was said to be submissive to (1) His earthly parents (cf. Luke 2:51) and (2) His heavenly Father (cf. I Cor. 15:28). He is our guide in this area!

See Special Topic: Submission at 10:3.

▣ **“to the governing authorities”** Although Paul used this word (*exousia*) in other contexts to refer to angelic powers, primarily demonic (cf. 8:38; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12), here the context demands “civil authorities” (cf. I Cor. 2:6,8; Titus 3:1; I Pet. 2:13). The Bible seems to imply that there are angelic authorities behind human governments (Daniel 10 and the LXX of Deut. 32:8, “When the Most High divided the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God.” See Oscar Cullman, *Christ and Time* and Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*). But still governing authorities function under God (cf. vv. 1b,4a, and 6). See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: AUTHORITY (*EXOUSIA*)

It is interesting to observe Luke’s use of *exousia* (authority, power, or legal right).

1. In 4:6 Satan claims to be able to give Jesus authority.
2. In 4:32,36 the Jewish people were amazed at how Jesus taught using His personal authority.
3. In 9:1 He gave His power and authority to His Apostles.
4. In 10:19 He gave His authority to the seventy missionaries.
5. In 20:2,8 the central question of Jesus’ authority is asked.
6. In 22:53 evil has been allowed authority to condemn and kill Jesus.

Although not in Luke, Matthew’s introduction to the Great Commission, “all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth,” is a marvelous statement (Matt. 28:18).

Jesus’ answer to their question would have been

1. God’s spoken words at His
 - a. baptism (Luke 3:21-22)
 - b. transfiguration (Luke 9:35)
2. OT fulfilled prophecy
 - a. tribe of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10)
 - b. family of Jesse (cf. II Samuel 7)
 - c. born in Bethlehem (cf. Micah 5:2)
 - d. Born during the fourth empire (Rome) of Daniel 2
 - e. helped the poor, blind, needy (Isaiah)
3. His exorcisms revealed His power and authority over Satan and his kingdom.
4. His resuscitations of the dead showed His power over physical life and death.
5. His miracles all reveal His power and authority over the temporal, spacial, and physical.
 - a. nature
 - b. feedings

- c. healings
- d. mind readings
- e. catching fish

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUMAN GOVERNMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Definition – Government is humanity organizing itself to provide and secure sensed needs (i.e., Genesis 4 and 11). Humans are social beings (even before the Fall (cf. Gen. 2:18). Families, tribes, nations give us community.
- B. Purpose – God has willed that order is preferable to anarchy.
 - 1. The Mosaic legislation, particularly the Decalog, is God’s will for mankind in society. It balances worship and life.
 - 2. No form or structure of government is advocated in Scripture, although ancient Israel’s theocracy is the anticipated form of heaven. Neither democracy nor capitalism is a biblical truth. Christians are to act appropriately in whatever governmental system they find themselves. The purpose of the Christian is evangelism and ministry, not revolution. All governments are transitory!
- C. Origin of human government
 - 1. Roman Catholicism has asserted that human government is an innate need, even before the Fall. Aristotle seems to have first asserted this premise. He says, “man is a political animal” and by this he meant that government “exists for the promotion of the good life.”
 - 2. Protestantism, especially Martin Luther, has asserted that human government is inherent in the Fall. He calls it “the Kingdom of God’s left hand.” He said that “God’s way to control bad men is to put bad men in control.”
 - 3. Karl Marx has asserted that government is the means by which a few elite keep the masses under control. For him, government and religion play a similar role.

II. BIBLICAL MATERIAL

- A. Old Testament
 - 1. Israel is the pattern which will be utilized in heaven. In ancient Israel YHWH was King. Theocracy is the term used to describe God’s direct rule (cf. I Sam. 8:4-9).
 - 2. God’s sovereignty in human government can be clearly seen in His appointing
 - a. all kings, Dan. 2:21; 4:17,24-25
 - b. the Messianic reign, Dan. 2:44-45
 - c. Nebuchadnezzar (neo-Babylon), Jer. 27:6; Dan. 5:28
 - d. Cyrus II (Persia), II Chr. 36:22; Ezra 1:1; Isa. 44:28; 45:1
 - 3. God’s people are to be submissive and respectful even to invading and occupying governments:
 - a. Daniel 1-4, Nebuchadnezzar (neo-Babylon)
 - b. Daniel 5, Belshazzar (neo-Babylon)
 - c. Daniel 6, Darius (Persia)

- d. Ezra and Nehemiah (Persia)
- 4. Restored Judah was to pray for Cyrus and his descendants' reign
 - a. Ezra 6:10; 7:23
 - b. Jews were to pray for civil authority, Mishnah, Avot. 3:2

B. New Testament

- 1. Jesus showed respect to human governments
 - a. Matthew 17:24-27; He paid the Temple tax (religious and civil authorities were meant to be one, cf. I Pet. 2:17)
 - b. Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26, He advocated a place for the Roman tax and thereby Roman civil authority
 - c. John 19:11, God allows civil authority
- 2. Paul's words related to human governments
 - a. Romans 13:1-5, believers must submit to civil authorities for they are established by God
 - b. Romans 13:6-7, believers must pay taxes and honor civil authorities
 - c. I Timothy 2:1-3, believers must pray for civil authorities
 - d. Titus 3:1, believers must be subject to civil authorities
- 3. Peter's words related to human governments
 - a. Acts 4:1-31; 5:29, Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (this shows biblical precedent for civil disobedience)
 - b. I Peter 2:13-17, believers must submit to civil authorities for the good of society and for evangelism
- 4. John's words related to human governments
 - a. Revelation 17, the whore of Babylon stands for human government organized and functioning apart from God
 - b. Revelation 18, the whore of Babylon is destroyed

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Human government (in a fallen world) is ordained by God. This is not "the divine right of Kings," but the divine task of government. No one form is advocated above another.
- B. It is a religious duty for believers to obey and pray for civil authority.
- C. It is proper for believers to support human government by taxes with a proper reverent attitude.
- D. Human government is for the purpose of civil order. They are God's servants for this task.
- E. Human government is not ultimate. It is limited in its authority. Believers must act for their conscience's sake in rejecting civil authority when it oversteps its divinely appointed bounds. As Augustine has asserted in *The City of God*, we are citizens of two realms, one temporal and one eternal (cf. Phil. 3:20). We have responsibility in both, but God's kingdom is ultimate! There is both an individual and corporate focus in our responsibility to God.
- F. We should encourage believers in a democratic system to actively participate in the process of government and to implement, when possible, the teachings of Scripture.
- G. Social change must be preceded by individual conversion. There is no real lasting eschatological hope in government. All human governments, though willed and used by God, are sinful expressions of human organization apart from God. This concept is expressed in the Johannine usage of the term "the world" (i.e., I John 2:15-17).



NASB “those which exist are established by God”

NKJV “that exist are appointed by God”

NRSV “that have been instituted by God”

TEV “have been put there by God”

NJB “have been appointed by God”

This is a PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This grammatical form asserts that God is behind all human authority (cf. John 19:11; Dan. 2:21; 4:17). This does not refer to “the divine right of Kings,” but to the divine will for order. This is not asserting a specific type of government, but government itself. Civil order is better than chaos (cf. v. 6).

13:2 “whoever resists authority” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. This refers to a personal habitual rebellion against an established order, literally, “to set one’s self in opposition” (cf. Acts 18:6; James 5:6). In Mark 12:17, Jesus clearly stated the realm for both government and church. In Acts 5:25-32 we see what happens when authorities overstep their bounds.

“has opposed. . .have opposed” This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE and a PERFECT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. These speak of a settled or established rebellion. God has provided for order in this fallen world (cf. vv. 4,6). To oppose order is to oppose God, unless the civil authorities step beyond their God given bounds. The real spiritual issue is submission to authority. Fallen humanity wants autonomy!

“will receive condemnation to themselves” The KJV translates “condemnation” as “damnation.” This word has intensified its meaning in English since A.D. 1611. The NKJV translates it as “judgment.” In context this could refer to (1) God’s judgment or (2) civil punishment (cf. v. 4). These people bring judgment on themselves by their attitudes and actions against authority (cf. John 3:17-21).

13:3 See parallel comment in I Pet. 2:14.

“rulers” See Special Topic: *Archē* at 8:38.

“authority” See special Topic at 13:1.

13:4 “for it is a minister of God to you for good” The governmental authorities act against civil evil-doers whereas the believer is restricted in his personal retaliation (cf. 12:17-19). Martin Luther stated “God’s way to control bad men is to put bad men in control.”

“if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which means possible future action.



NASB “for it does not bear the sword for nothing”

NKJV “for he does not bear the sword in vain”

NRSV “for the authority does not bear the sword in vain”

TEV “their power to punish is real”

NJB “it is not for nothing that they symbol of authority is the sword”

The word “sword” (*machaira*) refers to the small Roman sword used in capital punishment (cf. Acts 12:2; Rom. 8:35). This passage and Acts 25:11 give the New Testament basis for capital punishment, while Gen. 9:6 clearly states the Old Testament perspective. Fear is one effective deterrent to chaos!

▣ **“for it is a minister of God, an avenger”** The term for avenger (*ekdikos*) is used several times in the OT. It is even used in the first part of Lev. 19:18. In the OT if a person killed another person, even accidentally, that person’s family had the right to exercise the “eye-for-an-eye” vengeance (the blood avenger). Paul seems to be relating the OT custom to the authority of civil government.

In I Thess. 4:6 God is said to be the avenger, which follows Rom. 12:19. Both of these refer to Deut. 32:35 (cf. Heb. 10:30).

13:5 “it is necessary to be in subjection” There are two reasons stated (1) to escape punishment, either God’s or the governing civil authorities and (2) for the believers’ conscience.

▣ **“for conscience sake”** There is not an OT counterpart to the Greek term “conscience” unless the Hebrew term “breast” implies a knowledge of self and its motives. Originally the Greek term referred to consciousness related to the five senses. It came to be used of the inner senses (cf. Rom. 2:15). Paul uses this term twice in his trials in Acts (i.e., 23:1 and 24:16). It refers to his sense that he had not knowingly violated any known religious duties toward God (cf. I Cor. 4:4).

Conscience is the developing understanding of believers’ motives and actions based on

1. a biblical worldview
2. the indwelling Spirit
3. a lifestyle knowledge based on the word of God

It is made possible by the personal reception of the gospel.

13:6 “because of this you also pay taxes” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, although in form it might be a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE (cf. JB). This is one example of a Christian’s responsibility to civil authorities precisely because the government authorities are God’s servants (cf. vv. 1-2).

13:7

NASB “Render to all what is due them: tax. . .; custom. . .; fear. . .; honor”

NKJV “Render therefore to all their due; taxes. . .; customs. . .; fear. . .; honor”

NRSV “pay to all what is due them—taxes. . .; revenue. . .; respect. . .; honor”

TEV “Pay, then, what you owe them; pay them your personal and property taxes, and show respect and honor for them all”

NJB “Pay every government official what he has a right to ask—whether it be direct tax or indirect, fear or honor”

This could refer to two separate groups of civil authorities (cf. RSV), but probably what is meant is that Christians are to give both taxes and respect to civil authorities because they function as God’s ministers (cf. vv. 1,4 [twice],6; Matt. 22:15-22).

The two terms, “tax” and “custom” are used synonymously here (although TEV makes a distinction). If analyzed etymologically (the original meaning), the first referred to taxes paid by a conquered nation (cf. Luke 20:22) and the second to personal taxes (cf. Matt.17:25; 22:17,19).

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ROMANS 13:8-14

A. It is possible to understand vv. 1-7 as a self-contained literary context. However, the subject of “owing” in v. 7 seems to be continued in a different sense in v. 8. Believers owe an obligation to the state; believers also owe an obligation to other human beings.

B. Verses 8-10 are a unified thought, as are vv. 11-14. They continue the discussion from chapter 12 of the Christian’s responsibility to love others.

- C. Paul’s use of the OT Decalogue as a moral guide to New Covenant believers shows the continuing relevance of the OT in the area of godly living (sanctification), not salvation (justification, cf. Galatians 3). It seems that Paul has combined several sources to construct his ethical guidelines:
1. the words of Jesus
 2. the guidance of the Spirit
 3. the Old Testament
 4. his rabbinical training
 5. his knowledge of the Greek thinkers (especially the Stoics)
- This characterized the “law of love”— love for God, love for humanity, service to God, service to humanity!
- D. Verses 11-14 have an eschatological (end of time) orientation. The contrast of darkness and light was characteristic of Jewish literature, including the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is also common in the writings of John and Paul. “The already” versus “the not yet” tension of the Christian life is the stimulus for godly living. The “new age” (Kingdom of God) has been inaugurated and will soon be consummated. This passage is very similar to I Thess. 5:1-11.
- E. Verses 13-14 had a life-changing affect on Augustine in the summer of A.D. 386. He says, in his *Confessions* 8:29, “No further would I read, nor had I any need; instantly at the end of this sentence, a clear light flooded my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished away.”

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:8-10

⁸Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. ⁹For this, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* law.

13:8 “Owe nothing to anyone” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means stop an act already in process. This emphatic phrase has two NEGATIVES. This may have related to taxation issues (vv. 6-7). Financial debt is always an emotional and potentially spiritual drain. Be careful of worldliness. It robs believers of their ability to support Christian causes and personal charity. However, this verse cannot be used as a proof text for “no consumer credit.” The Bible must be interpreted in light of its own day. It is not an American morning newspaper! Verses 8-10 are emphasizing the priority of our loving one another (1) as covenant brothers (Matt. 22:39-40; John 13:34-35) and (2) as fellow human beings (cf. Matt. 5:42; Gal. 6:10).

The NIDNTT, vol. 1, p. 668, makes the observation that the VERB “owe” has two senses.

1. in the Gospels it is used of a debt
2. in Paul’s Letters it is used of a responsibility

In this text Paul seems to combine these connotations.

▣ **“except to love one another”** This is the key thought of vv. 8-10 (cf. John 13:34; 15:12; Rom. 12:10; I Cor. 13; Phil. 2:3-4; I Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; II Pet. 1:7; I John 3:11; 4:7, 11-12).

▣ **“he who loves his neighbor”** This VERB is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. This does not refer to isolated or seasonal acts of love, but to a lifestyle of Christlike love.

The term “neighbor” is literally, “another of a different kind” (*heteros*), although the distinction between *heteros* and *allos* (another of the same kind) was breaking down in Koine Greek. In context this may refer to one’s neighbor, in the widest possible terms, believer or not (cf. Luke 12:14-21; 10:25-37). However, the quote from Lev. 19:18 in context refers to another covenant partner (a fellow Israelite).

Christians should love other Christians as brothers and lost people as potential brothers (cf. Gal. 6:10). Christianity is a family. Each member lives and serves for the health and growth of the whole (cf. I Cor. 12:7).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “has fulfilled the Law”

TEV “has obeyed the Law”

NJB “have carried out your obligations”

This common Greek VERB (*pleroō*) can be translated in several ways. It is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which can be translated as “it has been and continues to be fulfilled.” Robert Hanna, *A Grammatical Aid to The Greek New Testament*, quotes A. T. Robertson and calls it “a gnomic perfect (referring to a customary truth, well known by the recipients)” (p. 28). It is repeated in v. 10 (cf. Gal. 5:14; 6:2).

13:9 It is not unusual for Paul to use the Mosaic Law (Exod. 20:13-17 or Deut. 5:17-21 and Lev. 19:18) to motivate New Covenant believers. In Eph. 6:2-3, Paul also used one of the Ten Commandments as a motivation for Christians (cf. I Tim. 1:9-10). This OT text was not a means of salvation, but it was still God’s revealed will for how humans should treat God and each other (cf. Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:6,11). Possibly quoting from the OT was Paul’s way of relating to both Jewish and Gentile believers in the Roman Church. This use of the term “fulfilled” also related to Jesus’ discussion of the Law in Matt. 5:17.

It is possible that this is referring to law in general, law as societal norms, and not the Mosaic Law specifically (cf. JB). However, the fact that Paul quotes from the OT in v. 9 implies a reference to the Mosaic Law. Notice that only love, not human rule-keeping, can truly fulfill the Law! See Special Topics below.

Leviticus 19:18 is used in two significant ways.

1. Jesus uses it in conjunction with the *shema* (i.e., Deut. 6:4-6) as a summary of the whole Law (cf. Matt. 22:37-40; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27).
2. For Paul it functions as a summary of the second half of the decalog (i.e., one’s relationship with covenant partners (cf. Gal. 5:14), following Jesus’ comment in Matt. 7:12 and Luke 6:31).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL’S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW

It is good and from God (cf. Rom. 7:12,16).

- A. It is not the way to righteousness and acceptance by God (it can even be a curse, cf. Galatians. 3).
- B. It is still God’s will for believers because it is God’s self-revelation (Paul often quotes the OT to convict and/or encourage believers).
- C. Believers are informed by the OT (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; I Cor. 10:6,11), but not saved by the OT (cf. Acts 15; Romans 4; Galatians 3; Hebrews).

- D. It functions in the new covenant to:
1. show sinfulness (cf. Gal. 3:15-29)
 2. guide redeemed mankind in society
 3. inform Christian ethical decisions

It is this theological spectrum from cursing and passing away to blessing and permanency that causes the problem in trying to understand Paul's view of the Mosaic Law. In *A Man in Christ*, James Stewart shows Paul's paradoxical thinking and writing:

“You would normally expect a man who was setting himself to construct a system of thought and doctrine to fix as rigidly as possible the meanings of the terms he employed. You would expect him to aim at precision in the phraseology of his leading ideas. You would demand that a word, once used by your writer in a particular sense, should bear that sense throughout. But to look for this from Paul is to be disappointed. Much of his phraseology is fluid, not rigid. . . ‘The law is holy’ he writes, ‘I delight in the law of God after the inward man’ (cf. Rom. 7:12,22) but it is clearly another aspect of *nomos* that makes him say elsewhere, ‘Christ had redeemed us from the curse of the law (cf. Gal. 3:13)’” (p. 26).

SPECIAL TOPIC: NOTES ON EXODUS 20

EXODUS 20:13, MURDER

I. CONTEXT

- A. It needs to be remembered that even the commands that seem to be of a social nature are really religious. God's sovereignty over creation and redemption are shadowed in these commands. The command not to murder is, in proper focus, a word about the image of God in every human being and God's care and concern for human life.
- B. It needs to be remembered that each command reflects the community of faith. The prohibition on taking a life in an illegal manner is primarily and originally focused with the believing community. Its implications are as wide as humanity!

II. WORD STUDY OF SIGNIFICANT TERMS

A. “Murder”

1. This is a rare term (*rasah*) for taking a life, used only 46 times in the OT. There are two other much more common terms.
 - a. *Harag*, used 165 times
 - b. *Hemit*, used 201 times
2. The term (*Rasah*) seems to have an original limited meaning and an expanded meaning.
 - a. Originally it related to taking the life of a covenant partner in a legal, premeditated way, often associated with “the kinsman redeemer” or “*go'el*.” This usage involved premeditation but in a sense of legal revenge (cf. Num. 35:30-34; Lev. 24:13-23). In reality the Lex Talionis, “eye for eye,” (cf. Gen. 9:5-6) was a way to limit revenge. Later, the cities of refuge (Deut. 4:41; Josh. 20:3) were established so that a covenant member who accidentally or passionately killed another member of the community could flee the wrath of the victim's family.

- b. Later the term came to refer to the motive or attitude behind the taking of a life. The concept of “intentionality” becomes uppermost! (cf. Exod. 21:12-14; Num. 35:11,22; Deut. 28:24).
 - c. This distinction becomes very significant in this command. It seems in context to refer only to others within the covenant community. It is related to the kinsman redeemer, or blood revenge. However, the term is used in later passages which reflect the Decalogue, Hosea 4:2 and Jeremiah 7:9, to refer to a murderer. This word relates not only to the law but to the motive. It expands from neighbor to fellow human being.
3. This term certainly does not relate to our modern ethical issue of capital punishment or war. The Jews never had a problem with community execution or holy war (or, for that matter, unholy war!).
 4. The best translation for our modern culture would be “premeditated murder.”

III. CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The sixth, seventh, and eighth commands are made up of only two Hebrew words. They are very short and to the point.
- B. Life, like all of life, is related to God. How we treat others reflects our thoughts about God

IV. NEW TESTAMENT PARALLELS

- A. Jesus
 1. His expansion of this commandment (cf. Matt. 5:21-26) gives us the proper orientation for our modern discussion about how to apply this text to our day.
 2. Jesus obviously moved the Decalogue from the realm of actions into the realm of motives. We are what we think! “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” The thought life is much more relevant and significant than we normally give it credit.
- B. John
 1. I John. 3:15, this same concept of hate being considered murder is stated.
 2. The Greek terms used in Matthew 5:21ff and I John 3:15 are different but the meaning is essentially the same.
 3. Note the positive aspect in I John 4:19-21.

V. APPLICATION TRUTHS

- A. Even though an unintentional murder can escape the blood avenger by fleeing to a city of refuge (cf. Num. 35; Josh. 20), he has to pay the penalty of confinement in that city until the death of the High Priest. The consequences of his act still remain!
- B. Although this verse does not directly relate to suicide, as the ancients probably never thought of this event, the text still gives a spiritual principle concerning the sanctity of human life and God’s sovereignty and purpose for human life made in His image. This text speaks a strong word to our day in this area!
- C. This text does not, however, speak a decisive word to the modern question of: (1) capital punishment or (2) war. For Israel, these were not evil things in themselves. The Israelites were involved in both of these acts. Still, the principle of the significance of life made in God’s image and under His control is an important truth in this area.

- D. This text does speak a needed word about the dignity and sanctity of human life! We in the believing community are stewards, not only of our own actions, but of our society. The gift of life is both individual and corporate.

We are responsible for the physical, social, and psychological abuse of our own bodies as we are the physical, social, and psychological abuse of others in our community. This is especially true in a culture like ours where we are allowed to speak to and, thereby, change the system. We are our brothers' keeper!

EXODUS 20:14, ADULTERY

I. CONTEXT

- A. It is obvious that the commandment is related to one's respect for God which is seen in respect for one's neighbor's life, wife, and property (cf. Jer. 5:8). This is verified by the different order of these commands in the Septuagint.
- B. The Deuteronomic parallel shows the appropriateness of adopting this ancient truth to our culture.
- C. As respect for parents was seen as a key to a stable society, so too, is this command.
- D. This command also implies God's ownership and control of our sexual and family lives.
- E. This command seems to have been based on Genesis 2:24 as command number 4 was based on Genesis 2:1-3.

II. WORD STUDY

- A. The major term in this text is "adultery." It is crucial that one understands this term in light of ancient Hebrew culture.
1. This term is distinct in an OT context from "fornication." Adultery relates to at least one party in the sexual relationship being married. The term "fornication" implies both parties are not married (cf. Pro. 29:3; 31:3). The distinction is lost in the NT Greek terms.
 2. This possibility explains the reason for the emphasis on marital status because it relates to the importance of inheritance rights which were involved in God's promise of "the land." Every 50 years (Jubilee) all land was to revert to the original tribal owners.
 3. Adultery was culturally condemned before the Mosaic legislation (cf. Gen. 12:10ff; 26:7ff; 39:9).
 4. Adultery was seen as a sin against:
 - a. Neighbor – Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18
 - b. Marriage – Leviticus 18:20
 - c. God – Genesis 20:1-13; 26:7-11
 5. It was punishable by death for both parties:
 - a. Leviticus 20:10
 - b. Deuteronomy 22:22-24
 - c. Ezekiel 16:40 (metaphor)
 - d. Strict warnings are found in Proverbs 1-9

III. RELATION TO NT

- A. Jesus used Leviticus 19:18 as a summary of the Old Revelation (cf. Luke 10:27). This confirms that the Ten Commandments are related to our treatment of others.

- B. Jesus intensifies the commands in Matthew 5:28. He places the emphasis on motive rather than action. The Jews saw the mind as the seed-bed of the soul. What one thought was what one really was (Pro. 23:7). This makes the Ten Words almost impossible to keep—that is the purpose! (cf. Gal. 2:15-3:29).

IV. MODERN APPLICATION

- A. Marriage is possibly the best modern analogy of a lifelong faith commitment in God's name. It is our best chance to understand the realities of OT covenant concepts (Mal. 2:14). Our respect for our mate in all aspects, including human sexuality, helps us comprehend the thrust of this verse.
- B. Marriage stability and loyalty, like respect for parents, is a major pillar of societal strength and longevity.
- C. It needs to be emphasized that human sexuality is a gift from God. It was His idea and will for man. The guidelines are not meant to thwart man's freedom or joy but to give some godly guidelines for fallen man. The bounds are revealed for our long-term benefit and happiness. Although man has abused sexuality, as he has all of God's gifts, it is still a powerful drive within humankind which must be under God's control and guidance.
- D. Sex must be guarded so that the sacredness of the human person (female or male) is respected because they are made in God's image. Our fallen focus on "me" is all too obvious in this area.

EXODUS 20:15, STEAL

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. Like all other regulation in the Decalog, our faith, love, and respect for God must be seen in the sacred and secular aspects of our daily lives. It is an abomination to God to claim to know Him and then exploit our covenant partner (cf. I John 4:20-21; 2:7-11).
- B. This command is meant to help maintain the fellowship of the covenant community. The quality of this spiritual fellowship will attract a confused and seeking world to our God which is the purpose of Scripture.
- C. As other commandments have focused on God's ownership of all of life, so too, this one! We are stewards, not owners. Our fallen drive toward possessions, without cost, is behind this prohibition (cf. Ps. 50:10-12).

II. WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

- A. This is the third command in the second half of the Decalog which is made up of only two words in Hebrew.
- B. The object of the prohibition is absent. This is usually supported by:
 - 1. The context of the two previous commands relating to capital offenses.
 - 2. The presence of applicable parallel passages both immediate (Exod. 21:16) and remote (Deut. 24:7). Also see Genesis 37.
- C. However, the short form is also defensible
 - 1. It is recorded for us by inspiration
 - 2. It widens the scope of the injunction

3. There is also a parallel passage in the immediate context which relates to theft—Exodus 22:1ff.
4. Jesus apparently quotes this passage in reference to stealing (cf. Matt. 19:18).
- D. Theft is also dealt with in the other ancient Law Codes but usually the penalty is death, mutilation, or 30 times restitution.
- E. There are some significant parallel passages which define and explain this truth:
 1. Leviticus 19:1-18—“You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy”
 - a. Our lifestyle must reflect the family characteristics of our Father and our God (cf. v. 18).
 - b. Our faith must impact our lives daily, both in positive actions and negative prohibition, both informed by proper motives (cf. v. 17).
 - c. Compassion for the ostracized and needy, vv. 9-10, 13, is as significant as refusal to rip off our neighbors, v. 11.
 2. Amos 8:4-7—God hates exploitations!
 3. Micah 6:6-8—God wants proper motives in all of our actions. Why we don’t steal is the issue!
 4. Exodus 22:1ff—Often the missing truth in our modern discussion of robbery is restitution! Sin always costs!

III. APPLICATION TRUTHS

- A. Joy Davidman, C. S. Lewis’ wife, has written a delightful book on the Decalog. She translates this command “Thou shalt not try to get something for nothing.” This assuredly widens the scope beyond possessions. She also says that “property is neither sin nor inalienable right, but a loan, a trust from God.”
- B. Theft, like all other sins of the fallen heart, are dealt with by a new heart, Eph. 4:28. It is amazing how the old nature of “take” turns into the new nature of “share!”
- C. Our respect for God is clearly seen in our respect for other covenant partners! This truth overshadows the Decalog.
- D. Modern man steals in many ways!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does modern man practice stealing?
2. How is restitution related to repentance?
3. How does this verse relate to capitalism’s view of property?

EXODUS 20:17, COVET

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. It is possible to see the relationship between the last five commandments as follows:
 1. Number 6, 7, and 8 prohibit the injury of a covenant partner in an overt action.
 2. Number 9 prohibits the injury of a covenant partner in speech.
 3. Number 10 prohibits the injury of a covenant partner in thought.
- B. It is true that the act of coveting disrupts the person who is coveting, not the object, the neighbor. However, it is possible that this commandment expects that the thoughts will proceed to actions.

- C. Many see this commandment as a unique concept found only in the ancient Law code of Israel and which is absent in the other Law codes of the Ancient Near East. This new concept would be the prohibition of thought. It is true that Israel perceived the thought life to be the origin of evil deeds (cf. Pro. 23:7; James 1:14-15). Yet, this verse seems to relate to thoughts which issue in actions. Several passages use the term “covet” in connection with a resulting action (cf. Deut. 7:25; Josh. 7:21; Micah 2:2).
- D. If it is true that emphasis is placed on that which is listed first and last, the true significance of this command is seen. Exclusive worship of God is first, but our attitudes and motives toward the things of this world affect our true devotion to God. This twin emphasis is also seen in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 6:33—“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things (cf. vv. 19-32) shall be added to you.”

II. WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

- A. Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21, although basically the same, have several significant differences:
 - 1. The wife is included in the larger concept of “house” or a man’s property in Exodus 20 while she is placed in a separate, seemingly priority, category in Deuteronomy 5.
 - 2. The passage in Exodus 20 has the Hebrew term “covet” which means “desire to acquire,” but Deuteronomy 5 has a second term, “desire” as well as “covet.” “Covet” speaks of desire which is connected to an action to acquire the object of the desire but “desire” seems to focus on the attitude alone.
 - 3. Also, Exodus 20, written to the children of Israel during their wilderness wandering period, has no mention of “field” in the list of possessions while Deuteronomy 5 is restating the same commands for a settled society in the Promised Land.
- B. The term “covet” is a neutral term. It can refer to desiring good things (cf. Ps. 19:10; I Cor. 12:31).
- C. Improper desire is the root cause of the fall of Satan, Adam and Eve and all of us. Paul stressed his personal struggle with coveting in Romans 7:7-8. Coveting is basically a discontentment and lack of trust in God’s care and provision.
- D. Several NT passages relate to coveting:
 - 1. Man’s problem is discontentment and greed (cf. Luke 12:15; I Tim. 6:8-10).
 - 2. Coveting is included in Jesus’ list of defiling sins (cf. Mark 7:17-23; I Cor. 5:10; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5).

III. APPLICATION TRUTHS

- A. The answer to lustful greed and discontentment is:
 - 1. Love – Rom. 13:8-10
 - 2. Contentment – Heb. 13:5; Phil. 4:11-13 (and sharing, Phil. 4:14)
- B. The command says “stop” but only Christ gave us the means to stop! In Him we can control our thought life to some degree.
- C. God knows our hearts and minds
 - 1. I Chronicles 28:9
 - 2. Proverbs 20:27
 - 3. Psalm 139:1,23
 - 4. Jeremiah 17:10
 - 5. Romans 8:27

6. Revelation 2:23

- D. Things are not evil, but when they become priority they become sin. Things are not ultimate or eternal; people made in God's image are! Coveting affects the Covenant Community in insidious and destructive ways!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is coveting?
2. How does modern man covet?
3. Are our thoughts sin?
4. Why are thoughts so significant in the Christian life?
5. Why is the commandment in Exodus 20:17 somewhat different from the one in Deuteronomy 5:21?

▣ **“For this”** This is a reference to the Ten Commandments or the Decalog. The order of this listing of the second half of the Ten Commandments follows the Greek manuscript B, called Vaticanus. It is slightly different from the Masoretic Hebrew Text of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The second half of the Decalog dealt with Israel's relationship to each other based on their relationship to YHWH.

▣ **“and if there is any other commandment”** This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. There are other commandments. The phrase meant “if there are any other commandments outside the Decalog.” In other words, this sums up all the Mosaic Law or possibly “law” in general.

There is a variant in the Greek manuscript traditions as to how many and in what order these Ten Commandments are listed. Judaism has one numbering; Catholics and Protestants also have different numbering. The meaning of the passage is not affected by this variation, which is true of the vast majority of the manuscript variations.

▣ **“it is summed up in this saying”** This is a quote from Lev. 19:18. It was quoted several times in the Gospels (cf. Matt. 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31 and Luke 10:27). Jesus calls it the second great or foremost commandment. It was also quoted in Gal. 5:14 and James 2:8. When one loves God then one will love what God loves (i.e., human beings made in His image, cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

▣ **“YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF”** Believers must love themselves as God loves them before they can love and accept others. Appropriate self love is not evil. The major truth of this section is stated clearly—love others (cf. v. 10). Those who have been touched by God's self-giving, sacrificial love will love others in the same way (cf. I John 3:16). This is the crux of Christlikeness (the restored image of God.) In the presence of this kind of love there is no need for “law.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:11-14

¹¹**Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.** ¹²**The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.** ¹³**Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.** ¹⁴**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.**

13:11

NASB	“do this”
NKJV	“and do this”
NRSV	“Besides this”
TEV	“You must do this”
NJB	“Besides”

This is a way of linking what follows (vv. 11-14) with what precedes (vv. 9-10). Be doers of the word, not just hearers (cf. James 1:22,23,25)! Love must be put into action.

▣ **“knowing the time”** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. This term for time (*kairos*) was used in the sense of a special period of time, not regular chronological time (*chronos*). Believers must live in (1) the light of the any-moment return of Christ and (2) the new age has dawned.

▣ **“that it is already the hour”** This metaphor, “the hour” (used often in John’s Gospel), refers to a special moment (similar to *kairos*) in God’s redemptive plan (cf. 3:26; I Cor. 7:29; 10:11; James 5:8; I Pet. 4:7; II Pet. 3:9-13; I John 2:18; Rev. 1:3; 22:10). It is used both of the times of Jesus’ crucifixion and return.

▣ **“sleep”** This term is used here metaphorically of moral and spiritual laxity (cf. Eph. 5:8-14; I Thess. 5:6). Words only have meaning in a specific context. Be careful of a fixed definition. All words have several possible meanings (semantical field).

▣ **“for now salvation is nearer”** Salvation is an initial decision and a process (see Special Topic at 10:14). Salvation will not be complete until believers have their new bodies (cf. I John 3:2; I Thess. 4:13-18; Heb. 9:28; I Pet. 1:5). Theologically this is called “glorification” (Rom. 8:30). It is the hope of every generation of Christians to expect the Lord back in his or her lifetime (cf. Luke 21:28). Paul was no exception (cf. I Thess. 4:15).

▣ **“than when we believed”** Christianity begins with a decision (instantaneous justification and sanctification), but must result in a godly lifestyle (progressive sanctification, see Special Topic at 6:4) and ends in Christlikeness (glorification). One must accept God’s offer in Christ (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13). This initial decision is not the end, but the beginning!

13:12 “The night is almost gone” This refers to the present evil age which is already being destroyed and replaced (cf. I Cor. 7:29-31; 10:11; James 5:8; Eph. 5:8,14; I John 4:7; II John 2:17-18; Rev. 1:3; 22:10). See Special Topic at 12:2. Paul, and especially John, use the contrast between dark and light, as did the Dead Sea Scrolls.

▣ **“the day is at hand”** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. These are the last days (cf. Phil. 4:5; James 5:9). We have been in the last days since Jesus’ incarnation. They will last until His glorious return. All believers since the first century are surprised by such a long delay in Christ’s return. However, the new age has dawned in Christ.

This note on the nearness of Christ’s return is taken from the “Crucial Introduction” to my commentary on Revelation. See it free online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

“**SIXTH TENSION** (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus’ return is a powerful promised hope of every

generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:10)
2. the revelation of “the man of Sin” (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thess. 2; Rev. 13)
3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Rev. 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live everyday as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!”

▣ **“lay aside. . .put on”** These are AORIST MIDDLE SUBJUNCTIVES, which give a note of contingency. The implication is “you yourselves lay aside. . .put on once for all or decisively.” Both God and mankind are active in both justification (repentance and faith) and sanctification (godly living). This clothing metaphor is very common in Paul’s writings. Believers are to take off their sleeping clothes and put on their battle array (cf. Eph. 4:22-25; Col. 3:10,12,14). We are Christian soldiers preparing for the daily spiritual battle (cf. Eph. 6:10-18). See note in NIDNTT, vol. 1, pp. 315-316.

▣ **“the armor of light”** This is probably an allusion to Isa. 59:17. Believers must decisively put on the armor and weapons of righteousness (cf. II Cor. 6:7; 10:4; Eph. 6: 11,13; I Thess. 5:8). God’s armor is available to believers but they must

1. recognize their need
2. recognize God’s provision
3. personally and intentionally implement it into their daily thought and life

There is a daily spiritual battle! See Clinton F. Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare*.

13:13 “Let us behave properly” This is an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE, literally, literally “walk.” This was a Hebrew idiom for lifestyle (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). Paul uses it over 33 times.

The list of sins in this verse are made up of three pairs of two terms. The terms have some semantic overlap. It is possible they are meant to be synonyms. See Special Topic: Vices and Virtues at 1:28-32.

These terms may relate to the tension between believing Jews and Gentiles in the Roman church. The new Gentile believers may have been continuing (1) some of their immoral pagan worship practices or (2) acting arrogantly against the returning believing Jewish leaders who had left briefly because of Nero’s edict which banned all Jewish rites in Rome.

▣ **“not in carousing and drunkenness”** This referred to sexual immorality which was linked in pagan religious rituals to drunkenness. In the list of the sins of the flesh in Gal. 5:21, these terms are also listed side by side.

▣ **“not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality”** This pair seems to overlap the first pair. The second term is used extensively in the NT (cf. Mark 7:22; II Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; I Pet. 4:3; II Pet. 2:7). If the first pair focuses on drunkenness, this pair focuses on sexual immorality, even a socially uncontrolled abandonment to sensuality.

▣ **“not in strife and jealousy”** These terms speak of strife between people (cf. Gal. 5:20). This may have been the result of the inappropriate conduct of the first two pairs. If these are addressed to Christians (cf. I Cor. 3:3; Col 3:8), they reflect some of the pagan religious practices which must stop in believers’ lives. However, in context this verse is a contrast to believers, so in that sense, it would be a warning.

13:14 “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” This metaphor relates to the royal robe of King Jesus now placed on the shoulders of believers (positional sanctification). Some scholars see it as an allusion to baptismal clothing. This clothing metaphor is first mentioned in v. 12. It is a way of showing believers’ new position in Christ. It also emphasized the fact that believers must implement their new lifestyle choices (progressive sanctification) because of their new position in Christ (cf. Eph. 4:22,24; Col. 3:8). In Gal. 3:27 this truth is expressed as a statement of fact, INDICATIVE; here it is expressed as an IMPERATIVE (AORIST MIDDLE), a command.

This tension between the INDICATIVE statement and the IMPERATIVE is the tension between our position in Christ and our striving to possess that position (see Special Topic at 6:4). We are “saints” (holy ones) at the moment of salvation, but we are admonished to be “holy.” This is the biblical paradox of a full and free salvation in Christ and the clarion call for Christlikeness!

▣ **“make no provision”** This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE. This grammatical form usually means to stop an act already in process. This seems to imply that some Christians in Rome were living inappropriate moral lives. This may have been a carry over from their pagan worship practices.

It is difficult to explain the NT teachings about carnal Christianity. The NT authors present mankind’s condition in black and white terms. A carnal Christian is a contradiction in terms. Yet it is a reality of our “already” but “not yet” lives. Paul categorized humanity into three groups (I Cor. 2:14-3:1):

1. natural men (lost humanity), 2:14
2. spiritual men (saved humanity), 3:1
3. men of flesh (carnal Christians or baby Christians), 3:1

▣ **“the flesh in regard to its lusts”** Paul knew all too well the continuing dangers of our fallen Adamic nature (cf. Rom. 7; Eph. 2:3), but Jesus gives us the power and desire to live for God (cf. Romans 6). It is an ongoing struggle (cf. 8:5-7; I John 3:6-9). See Special Topic: Flesh (*sarx*) at 1:3.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was Paul’s statement about government so radical to the early Christians?
2. Should Christians be submissive to every form of government?
3. Should Christians be submissive to every legal requirement of government?
4. Does verse 1 teach the divine right of kings?
5. Is Paul breaking new ground theologically or is there a precedent in Jesus’ words in Matt. 22:21?
6. Is civil disobedience ever justified for Christians (cf. Acts 5:25-32)?
7. How does verse 4 relate to the issue of capital punishment?
8. Is the Christian’s conscience always right (cf. v. 5)?
9. Based on verse 8, should believers not have credit cards?
10. Does verse 8 speak of our love to other Christians or to all people?
11. Why does Paul use the Decalog as an incentive to New Testament believers?
12. Why would Paul list such terrible sins in connection with believers?
13. How does one “put on the Lord Jesus Christ?”

ROMANS 14

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Do Not Judge Your Brother	The Law of Liberty	Love Respects the Scruples of Others	Do Not Judge Others	Charity Toward the Scrupulous
14:1-12	14:1-13	14:1-4 14:5-6 14:7-9 14:10-12	14:1-4 14:5-12	14:1-12
Do Not Make Your Brother Stumble	The Law of Love		Do Not Make Others Fall	
14:13-23	14:14-23	14:13-23	14:13-18 14:19-23	14:13-21 (14:22-15:6) 14:22-23

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS ON VERSES 1-12

- A. This chapter tries to balance the paradox of Christian freedom and responsibility. The literary unit runs through 15:13.

B. The problem which precipitated this chapter was possibly the tension between Gentile and Jewish believers in the church of Rome (or possibly Paul's current experience in Corinth). Before conversion the Jews tended to be legalistic and the pagans tended to be immoral. Remember, this chapter is addressed to sincere followers of Jesus. This chapter does not address carnal believers (cf. I Cor. 3:1). The highest motive is ascribed to both groups. There is danger in the extremes on both sides. This discussion is not a license for nit-picking legalism or flaunting liberalism.

Remember that Paul wrote Romans from Corinth. The problem there was a party spirit, but here there were different types of believers.

C. Believers must be careful not to make their theology or ethics the standard for all other believers (cf. II Cor. 10:12). All believers must walk in the light they have but understand that their theology is not automatically God's theology. All believers are still affected by sin. We must encourage, exhort, and teach one another from the Scriptures, reason, and experience, but always in love. The more one knows the more one knows he does not know (cf. I Cor. 13:12)!

D. One's attitude and motives before God are the real keys in evaluating other believers' actions. Christians will stand before Christ to be judged on how they treated one another (cf. vv. 10,12 and II Cor. 5:10).

E. Martin Luther said, "A Christian man is a most free Lord of all, subject to none; the Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all." Biblical truth is often presented in a tension-filled paradox.

F. This difficult but crucial subject is dealt with in the entire literary unit of Romans 14:1-15:13 and also in I Corinthians 8-10 and Colossians 2:8-23. A helpful book for me in this area is Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 75-86.

G. However, it needs to be stated that pluralism among sincere believers is not a bad thing. Each believer has strengths and weaknesses. Each must walk in the light he/she has, always open to the Spirit and the Bible for more light. In this period of seeing through a glass darkly (I Cor. 13:8-13) one must walk in love (v. 15) and peace (vv. 17,19) for mutual edification.

H. The titles "stronger" and "weaker" which Paul gives to these groups prejudices them to us. This was certainly not Paul's intent. Both groups were sincere believers. We are not to attempt to mold other Christians into ourselves! We accept one another in Christ!

I. The entire argument could be outlined as

1. accept one another because God accepts us in Christ (cf. 14:1,3; 15:7);
2. do not judge one another because Christ is our only Master and Judge (cf. 14:3-12);
3. love is more important than personal freedom (cf. 14:13-23);
4. follow Christ's example and lay down your rights for others' edification & good (cf. 15:1-13).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:1-4

¹Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but not for the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions. ²One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*. ³The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. ⁴Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

14:1

NASB “Now accept”
NKJV “Receive”
NRSV, TEV “Welcome”
NJB “Give a welcome”

This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE (cf. 15:1). This is an ongoing command with emphasis on the subject. The PRONOUN “you” is in the Greek VERB, but is implied in English and refers to “strong” Christians (cf. 15:1). This implies two groups in the church at Rome. This may have related to (1) the tension between believing Jews and Gentiles (cf. 15:7-21) or (2) differing personality types. This whole context is dealing with true, sincere believers; some strong, some weak in their faith. Faith is used here in the sense of the understanding of the gospel and its radically new and freeing implications.



NASB, NKJV “the one who is weak in faith”
NRSV, TEV “those who are weak in faith”
NJB “If a person’s faith is not strong enough”

This phrase is emphasized by being fronted (i.e., put first in the Greek text). Literally it is “weak in faith.” The PRESENT TENSE focuses on the fact that it is a lifestyle characteristic. This refers to a legalistic mindset. The over scrupulous Christian believer is described in this chapter in three ways:

1. prohibitions of food (cf. 14:2,6,21)
2. emphasis on special days (cf. 14:5-6)
3. prohibition of wine (cf. 14:17,21)

This same type of person was mentioned in Rom. 15:1 and I Cor. 8:9-13; 9:22. Be careful not to categorize yourself too quickly as a strong or weak Christian. Often believers are weak in one area and strong in another.

Paul’s attitude toward these matters is very different in Gal. 4:9-10 and Col. 2:16-23. These texts reflect the attitudes and teachings of false teachers. In Romans these are sincere believers who have over-scrupulous consciences.

Many commentators think the “weak in faith” refers to Jewish believers (i.e., Judaizers) and their continuing emphasis on obedience to the Mosaic Law as understood in rabbinical traditions (i.e., Talmud). This surely fits #1 and #2 in paragraph one, but it does not fit #3. For this reason I think a certain personality type better fits the context. It may refer to Jewish or Gentile believers whose past traditions hold powerful sway!

SPECIAL TOPIC: WEAKNESS

Here is the contrast. The false teachers boast in their credentials and rhetorical style, but Paul knows the value of “weakness” (*astheneō*). Notice how often these terms (or their various forms) are used in I and II Corinthians.

<u>Boast</u>	<u>Weak</u>
I Corinthians 1:29,31	I Corinthians 1:25,27
3:21	2:3
4:7	4:10
5:6	8:7,9,10,11,12
9:15,16	9:22
II Corinthians 1:12,14	11:30
5:12 (twice)	12:22
7:4,14 (twice)	15:43
8:24	II Corinthians 10:10
9:2,3	11:21,29,30
10:8,13,15,16,17	12:5,9,10 (twice)
11:12,16,17,18,30	13:3,4 (twice), 9
12:1,5,6,9	

Paul uses the concept of weakness in several different ways.

1. weakness of God, I Cor. 1:25
2. weak in the world, I Cor. 1:27
3. Paul’s weakness and fear, I Cor. 2:3; 9:22; II Cor. 11:29,30; 12:5
4. Paul and his mission team, I Cor. 4:10; II Cor. 11:21
5. weak believer (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13), I Cor. 8:7,9,10,11,12; 9:22
6. physical illness, I Cor. 11:30
7. parts of the human body, I Cor. 12:22
8. physical body, I Cor. 15:43
9. Paul’s physical presence or his rhetorical skills, II Cor. 10:10
10. Paul’s weakness amplified God’s strength, II Cor. 12:9,10; 13:4,9
11. Christ’s message through Paul, II Cor. 13:3
12. Christ’s physical body, II Cor. 13:4



NASB	“but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions”
NKJV	“but not to dispute over doubtful things”
NRSV	“but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions”
TEV	“but do not argue with them about their personal opinions”
NJB	“without starting an argument”

Believers must fully accept other believers with whom they disagree without trying to change them! This demands freedom of conscience as the basis of fellowship, not an imposed uniformity. All believers are in process. They must give the Spirit time to work and mold each into maturity, but even in maturity, they will not all agree.

14:2 The diet referred to in this verse is for religious purposes, not health. This food problem arose from two possible sources (1) Jewish food laws (cf. Leviticus 11) or (2) meat sacrificed to pagan idols (cf. I Corinthians 8-10). Jesus clearly taught that food is not what defiles a person (cf. Matt. 15:10-20; Mark 7:14-23). This truth is illustrated by Peter's vision concerning Cornelius in Acts 10.

14:3 “The one who eats is not to regard with contempt” “Not to regard with contempt” is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE of *ezoutheneō* with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means stop an act already in process.

“Contempt” is literally “to make light of,” “set at naught,” or “count as worthless” (cf. 14:10; Luke 18:9; I Cor. 6:4; 16:11; II Cor. 10:10; Gal. 4:14; I Thess. 5:20). Believers must guard against a condescending self-righteousness. The strong in faith must not condemn the weak in faith.

▣ **“judge”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means stop an act already in process. The weak in faith must stop passing judgment on the actions of their brothers/sisters who disagree with them.

▣ **“for God has accepted him”** This is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE. This same term is translated “receive” in v. 1. The basis for believers accepting each other is that God through Christ (15:7) has accepted them. In context v. 3 is speaking directly to the over scrupulous, the Christian weak in faith.

14:4 “Who are you” This is emphatic in Greek, referring to the weak brother and sister.

▣ **“the servant”** This is the term *oiketēs*, which is formed from the term *oikos*, which means “house,” therefore, this is a home slave or servant (cf. Luke 16:13; Acts 10:7; Rom. 14:4; I Pet. 2:18). It is used in this sense in the Septuagint (cf. Gen. 9:25; 27:37; 44:16,33; 50:18). It is not used as the predominate term for slave or servant in the NT, which is *doulos*; it could also denote home servants or slaves.

Paul's argument here is that each believer is a slave/servant of Christ. He is their “lord” and He and He alone will direct them and hold them accountable for their actions and motives (cf. II Cor. 5:10).

▣ **“To his own master he stands or falls”** In context Paul is addressing the over scrupulous, but the statement obviously refers to both groups. Believers would do better getting the splinters out of their own eyes (cf. Matt. 7:1-15).

▣ **“and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand”** This was a wonderful promise (cf. 5:1-2; Jude 24-25). It also involves each believer's cooperation (cf. I Cor. 15:1-2). See Special Topic: Stand at 5:2.

There is a Greek manuscript variation at this point. The NKJV, following the uncial manuscripts D, F, G, 048 and 0150, as well as the Vulgate, has “God” (*Theos*), however, MSS P⁴⁶, **ℵ**, A, B, C, P have “Lord” (*kurios*). The UBS⁴ rates “Lord” as certain (A).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:5-9

⁵One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. ⁷For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; ⁸for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

14:5 “One person regards one day above another” Some people are still very calendar conscious concerning religion (i.e., certain days or annual events, cf. Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16-17). All days belong to God equally. There are no special days. There is no “secular” versus “sacred.” All is sacred!

▣ **“Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind”** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. This is the key to peace in this area. Believers’ personal convictions are priority for their actions (cf. v. 23), but not for all other believers. God does not live in my theological box. My theology is not necessarily God’s!

14:6 “for the Lord” This DATIVE phrase is used three times in v. 6 and twice in v. 8. All lifestyle choices by sincere believers need to be made as “unto the Lord” (cf. Eph. 6:7 and Col. 3:23), not just personal preferences, denominational or family traditions, or opinions!

14:7 “for not one of us lives for himself” No Christian is an island. Christians live first and foremost for Christ (cf. v. 8). Believers’ actions affect others. They are part of a large spiritual family. Therefore, they must limit their personal freedom in love (cf. I Cor. 10:24,27-33). They must allow others to grow into personal freedom. Legalism leads to self-righteous uniformity which is not of God. Jesus’ harshest words and condemnations were directed toward the self-righteous Pharisees.

14:8 “if. . .if” These are two THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which mean possible future action. Believers serve the Lord in all and every possible contingency (cf. Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:23)!

14:9 “Lord of both the dead and of the living” This is an unusual ordering of these terms. Their order may reflect Jesus’ death and resurrection. He is now Sovereign of both realms.

This truth forms the theological reason why Christians must live not for themselves, but also for other believers. They are not their own; they have been bought with a price. They are servants of Jesus, who died for their sin that they might no longer be a slave to sin, but to God (cf. Romans 6). Believers are to emulate Jesus’ life of loving service by dying to their self-centered desires (cf. II Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; I John 3:16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:10-12

¹⁰But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹For it is written, “AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD.” ¹²So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

14:10 “But you” This is fronted for emphasis.

▣ The two questions of v. 10 are the focus of vv. 1-12. The two groups referred to in v. 3 are again contrasted. One group “judges,” the other group regards “with contempt.” Both attitudes are inappropriate for “slaves!” Their master, Jesus Christ, is the only One who has the right to “criticize” or “look down on.” For believers to act as judge (1) usurps God’s place and (2) is preliminary and incomplete.

▣ **“we will all stand before the judgment seat of God”** This same truth is expressed in II Cor. 5:10. Believers will explain to the Lord how they treated one another. Jesus will act as divine Judge (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

The NKJV has “the judgment seat of Christ.” The Greek manuscripts that support the KJV are the early correctors of the ancient uncial Greek manuscripts \aleph^2 , and C^2 . *Theos* is in MSS \aleph , B, C, D, F and G.

Scribes probably changed the Greek text to conform to II Cor. 5:10. It is also possible that the scribes changed this verse to oppose the early view of Christ called “adoptionism.” There are several textual variants that seem to have been made to make the text more orthodox (cf. Bart D. Ehrman’s *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, published by Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 90-91. The UBS⁴ gives *Theos* a “B” rating (almost certain).

14:11 “For it is written” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. This was a specialized Hebrew idiom that was used to describe inspired OT quotes. This is an allusion to Isa. 45:23, which is also quoted in Phil. 2:10-11.

▣ **“As I live”** This is an oath formula which is a word play on the Covenant name for God, YHWH, which is a form of the Hebrew VERB “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). He is the ever-living, only-living God. Therefore, He is swearing by His own existence. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 9:29.

14:12 “So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God” Christians will be judged (cf. II Cor. 5:10), and criticizing brothers will be part of that experience. Some ancient Greek manuscripts omit “to God.” It is obviously implied by the context. This variant may have been influenced by the variant in v. 10. The UBS⁴ gives its inclusion (i.e., MSS \aleph , A, C, D) a “C” rating (difficulty in deciding).

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS ON ROMANS 14:13-23

- A. The subject of how Christians should treat each other began in vv. 1-12. It is based on the truth that they are to fully accept all types of Christians because Christ, who is their only master and judge, fully accepts both groups. Often spiritual things that are significant to one group because of their past, their personality type, their parents, their personal preferences, their experiences, etc. are not significant to God.
- B. This second section of the discussion of Christian freedom and responsibility develops the subject from a different point of view. In these verses it is the believer’s love for God, in Christ, that motivated him/her to love fellow Christians. As Jesus laid down His life for believers, they are to lay down their freedom for those (i.e., other believers) for whom He died (cf. II Cor. 5:13-14; I John 3:16). This emphasis on love as the basic motive of the Christian life is also seen in 13:8-10 in believer’s relations with non-believers.
- C. The truth that all things in the physical world are clean is very difficult for some Christians to accept. Often even believers place the blame for sin on “things” instead of themselves (i.e., “demon rum”). Paul states repeatedly that all things are clean (cf. 14:14,20; I Cor. 6:12; 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15). His statements follow Jesus’ teachings about food in Mark 7:18-23. Clean and unclean food is used as an illustration to Peter of God’s acceptance of Cornelius in Acts 10:15.
- D. This section is primarily addressed to the “stronger brother.” Paul concedes the half-truth of the statement that “all things are clean,” but adds that all things do not build up or edify the family of God (cf. I Cor. 6:12; 10:23). The strong brother’s freedom can devastate other Christians. Believers are their fellow believers’ keepers, through Christ and for Christ.
- E. It is very interesting that Paul does not state or imply that the “weaker brother” is in a spiritual process which will lead to becoming a “strong brother.” This whole discussion does not address growing in grace, but the priority of love between differing Christian understandings. Believers’

inclusion in one of the two groups is based more on personality type, religious training, and personal experiences than “right” or “wrong.” The believer’s task is not changing others but loving and respecting the other group. It is an issue of the heart, not the mind. God loves, accepts and gave His Son for all mankind, for both groups.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:13-23

¹³Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way. ¹⁴I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ¹⁵For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. ¹⁶Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; ¹⁷for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. ¹⁹So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. ²⁰Do 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. ²¹It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or *to do anything* by which your brother stumbles. ²²The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. ²³But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.*

14:13 “let us not judge one another” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which implies stopping an act already in process. This is not a warning but a prohibition. This is very similar to v. 16. The term “judge” has already been used 5 times by Paul in vv. 1-12 and now four more times in vv. 13-23.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHOULD CHRISTIANS JUDGE ONE ANOTHER?

This issue must be dealt with in two ways.

1. believers are admonished not to judge one another (cf. Matt. 7:1-5; Luke 6:37,42; Rom. 2:1-11; James 4:11-12)
2. believers are admonished to evaluate leaders (cf. Matt. 7:6,15-16; I Cor. 14:29; I Thess. 5:21; I Tim. 3:1-13; and I John 4:1-6)

Some criteria for proper evaluation may be helpful.

1. evaluation should be for the purpose of affirmation (cf. I John 4:1 – “test” with a view toward approval)
2. evaluation should be done in humility and gentleness (cf. Gal. 6:1)
3. evaluation must not focus on personal preference issues (cf. Rom. 14:1-23; I Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33)
4. evaluation should identify those leaders who have “no handle for criticism” from within the church or the community (cf. I Timothy 3).

▣ **“not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INFINITIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which implied the stopping of an act already in process. The same truth is stated in v. 21 and I Cor. 8:9.

The term “obstacle” referred to something in the road that causes one to stumble. The term “stumbling block” literally refers to a triggering mechanism on a baited animal trap.

There is a corporate aspect to Christianity. We are our fellow believers’ keeper, encourager, and friend. Faith is family!

14:14

NASB “I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus”
NKJV “I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus”
NRSV “I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus”
TEV “My union with the Lord Jesus makes me certain”
NJB “Now I am perfectly well aware, of course, and I speak for the Lord Jesus,”

This is a PERFECT ACTIVE form of *oida*, which was used in the sense of a PRESENT TENSE along with a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. Literally it means, “I continue to know and have been and continue to be convinced.” This is a restatement of the truth in vv. 5b and 22-23. Believers’ understanding of spiritual things comes from their relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. They must live in the light they have.

▣ **“that nothing is unclean in itself”** This same truth is illustrated in Acts 10:9-16. Things are not evil, people are evil. Nothing in creation is evil in and of itself (cf. v. 20; Mark 7:18-23; I Cor. 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4 and Titus 1:15)!

▣ **“but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean”** This meant unclean in a religious sense. Believers must evaluate their actions by their consciences (cf. vv. 5,22-23). Even if they are misinformed about an issue or action, they must walk in the light they have before God. They, also, must not judge other believers by their light, especially in ambiguous areas (cf. 14:1,3,4,10,13).

14:15 “For if because of food your brother is hurt” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Love, not rights; responsibility, not freedom determines our lifestyle.

This either relates to (1) Jewish food laws (cf. Lev. 11) or (2) meat sacrificed to idols (cf. I Cor. 8-10). Verse 20 expresses this truth so clearly.

▣ **“you are no longer walking according to love”** This is often called “the law of liberty” (cf. James 1:25; 3:12), “the royal law” (cf. James 2:8), or “the law of Christ” (cf. Gal. 6:2). There are New Covenant responsibilities and guidelines!

▣

NASB, NKJV “Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died”
NRSV “Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died”
TEV “Do not let the food that you eat ruin the person for whom Christ died”
NJB “You are certainly not free to eat what you like if that means the downfall of someone for whom Christ died”

This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means stop an act already in process. This is a very strong phrase. The freedom of some Christians should not cause the destruction of other Christians! This does not refer to a loss of salvation, but the loss of peace, assurance, and effective ministry. See F. F. Bruce, *Answers To Questions*, pp. 88-89.

The term “destroy” is the Greek word *lupeō*, which means “to cause grief, sorrow, or pain” (same in the LXX). Paul uses this word mostly in II Corinthians (cf. 2:2,4,5; 6:10; 7:8,9,11). Destroy is too strong a

translation. This does not refer to the loss of salvation, but the conviction of the Holy Spirit over violating one's personal convictions. If the believer's actions do not issue from faith they are sin (cf. v. 23).

14:16

NASB "do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil"

NKJV, NRSV "do not let your good be spoken of as evil"

TEV "do not let what you regard as good get a bad name"

NJB "you must not compromise your privilege"

This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which meant stop an act already in process. Freedom can easily turn into license!

This "good thing" in this verse refers to the actions of the strong believer. If a strong Christian acts on his/her freedom in such a way that weak believers are negatively affected and spiritually damaged, the "good thing" becomes an opportunity for the evil one!

This verse seems to change the focus from how Christians treat each other to possibly a concern for non-believers (cf. v. 18b). The VERB is from the word "blasphemy" (spoken) which is usually used of unbelievers.

14:17 "the kingdom of God" This is the only use of this phrase in Romans. It is a frequent topic of Jesus. It is a reality here and now as well as a future consummation (cf. Matt. 6:10).

The corporate life of the body of Christ is more valuable than the exercise of personal freedoms! See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In the OT YHWH was thought of as the King of Israel (cf. I Sam. 8:7; Ps. 10:16; 24:7-9; 29:10; 44:4; 89:18; 95:3; Isa. 43:15; 44:4,6) and the Messiah as the ideal king (cf. Ps. 2:6; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5). With the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem (6-4 B.C.) the kingdom of God broke into human history with new power and redemption (new covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:27-36). John the Baptist proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom (cf. Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15). Jesus clearly taught that the kingdom was present in Himself and His teachings (cf. Matt. 4:17,23; 9:35; 10:7; 11:11-12; 12:28; 16:19; Mark 12:34; Luke 10:9,11; 11:20; 12:31-32; 16:16; 17:21). Yet the kingdom is also future (cf. Matt. 16:28; 24:14; 26:29; Mark 9:1; Luke 21:31; 22:16,18).

In the Synoptic parallels in Mark and Luke we find the phrase, "the kingdom of God." This common topic of Jesus' teachings involved the present reign of God in human's hearts, which one day will be consummated over all the earth. This is reflected in Jesus' prayer in Matt. 6:10. Matthew, written to Jews, preferred the phrase that did not use the name of God (Kingdom of Heaven), while Mark and Luke, writing to Gentiles, used the common designation, employing the name of deity.

This is such a key phrase in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus' first and last sermons, and most of His parables, dealt with this topic. It refers to the reign of God in human hearts now! It is surprising that John uses this phrase only twice (and never in Jesus' parables). In John's gospel "eternal life" is a key metaphor.

The tension with this phrase is caused by the two comings of Christ. The OT focused only on one coming of God's Messiah—a military, judgmental, glorious coming—but the NT shows that He came the first time as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 and the humble king of Zech. 9:9. The two Jewish ages, the age of wickedness and the new age of righteousness, overlap. Jesus currently reigns in the hearts of believers, but will one day reign over all creation. He will come like the OT predicted! Believers live in "the already" versus "the not yet" of the kingdom of God (cf. Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart's *How to Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 131-134).

▣ **“but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”** It is the Spirit who gives these qualities to the individual believers and the believing community. These are the characteristics of God’s family, external and internal.

The term “righteousness” is used here by Paul in a specialized sense. See Special Topic at 1:17. Usually for him it describes imputed righteousness, a legal (forensic) declaration by God of the believer’s forgiveness and standing in Christ (cf. 3:21-31; 4). Sinful humanity is not only counted as righteous, they are to become righteous. It is both a gift and a goal, INDICATIVE and IMPERATIVE, an act of faith and a life of faith! See Special Topic at 6:4.

14:18 Believers self-limiting their freedoms for the sake of weaker believers is a service to Christ Himself. There is no stronger way to affirm our love for Jesus than loving, caring, and protecting those for whom He died.

▣ **“approved by men”** This may be a way of asserting that the Christian’s love for one another may open the door of ministry and witness to the unbelieving community (cf. v. 16; II Cor. 8:21; I Pet. 2:12). How we treat one another within the community of faith is a powerful witness, either positively or negatively.

14:19 “let us pursue” This term, *diōkō*, an OT idiom common in the Septuagint and also common in Paul’s writings, means “to follow eagerly” or “endeavor earnestly to acquire.” Paul uses this word in Rom. 9:30,31; 12:13; and here in the sense of “pursue,” but in 12:14 for those who persecute believers (cf. I Cor. 4:12; even of himself, 15:9; II Cor. 4:9; Gal. 1:13,23; Phil. 3:6).

This is either a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE (MSS \aleph , A, B, F, G, L & P) or a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE (MSS C, D) used in the sense of an IMPERATIVE. The UBS⁴ puts the SUBJUNCTIVE in its text, but gives it a “D” rating (with great difficulty).

Notice the things Christians should pursue.

1. hospitality, 12:13
2. the things that make for peace and the building up of one another, 14:19
3. love, I Cor. 14:1
4. Christlikeness, Phil. 3:12,14
5. what is good for one another and for all men, I Thess. 5:15
6. righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness, I Tim. 6:11
7. righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart, II Tim. 2:22

▣ **“for peace and the building up of one another”** This should be the believer’s goal in all things (cf. Ps. 34:14; Heb. 12:14). One’s personal freedom and theological understanding must lead to the stability and growth of the body of Christ (cf. 15:2; I Cor. 6:12; 14:26; Eph. 4:12). See Special Topic: Edify at 15:2.

14:20 “Do not tear down the work of God” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act in progress. This is a strong COMPOUND VERB (*kata + luō*). It is used only three times in Paul’s writings (cf. II Cor. 5:1 for death and Gal. 2:18 in the sense here, destroy). There is a play between “build up” in v. 19 and this word, which literally means “tear down.” Both are construction metaphors.

What is “the work of God” in this context? It cannot refer to maturity, but the Spirit’s activity in the life of the “weak” believers. No where in this context or I Corinthians 8-10 does Paul say one group should help the other group conform or change!

▣ **“all things indeed are clean”** See note at v. 14.



- NASB “but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense”
- NKJV “but it is evil for the man who eats with offense”
- NRSV “but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat”
- TEV “but it is wrong to eat anything that will cause someone else to fall into sin”
- NJB “but it becomes evil if by eating it you make somebody else fall away”

This verse is the central truth of this chapter (cf. I Cor. 10:25-26; Titus 1:15).

This is referring to meat offered to an idol (cf. I Corinthians 8-10). The meat is not good or evil, but if a weak believer, who thinks it is inappropriate, sees another Christian eating it and also eats, that which is morally neutral becomes evil because it violates his/her personal consciousness of the will of God (cf. v. 23).

Most English translations relate this clause to “the stronger brother” in that by their eating, a weaker believer is influenced. The Catholic translation of New American Bible gives the other option and relates the clause to “the weaker brother,” “but it is wrong for a man to eat when the food offends his conscience.” In context the first option seems best but the ambiguity may be purposeful and refer to both as do vv. 22-23.

14:21 This is a word to “the strong brothers.” This is the only basis in the Bible for the theological concept of “total abstinence” from certain foods or drinks. Strong Christians must limit their freedom for their Christian brothers/sisters and sincere searchers (lost people). Much of this self-limiting is cultural, regional and/or denominational.

These are two AORIST ACTIVE INFINITIVES with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which implied “never start an act.” Some have interpreted these AORISTS as applying only to certain occasions (cf. I Corinthians 8-10). Obviously eating and drinking cannot be prohibited.

14:22

- NASB “The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.”
- NKJV “Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.”
- NRSV “The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve.”
- TEV “Keep what you believe about this matter, then, between yourself and God. Happy are those who do not feel guilty when they do something they judge is right!”
- NJB “Hold on to your own belief, as between yourself and God—and consider the man fortunate who can make his decision without going against his conscience.”

This is the reaffirmation that believers must live in light of their own Holy Spirit-led, Bible-informed consciences (cf. v. 5). They must walk in the light they have; but, not so as to abuse his fellow believers’ faith. Verse 22 relates to the “stronger brother,” while verse 23 relates to the “weaker brother.”

Verse 22 starts with a manuscript variation. It can be a question (NKJV) or a statement (NASB, NRSV, TEV, and JB).

▣ “approves” See Special Topic at 2:18.

14:23 “But he who doubts” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. This refers to the over-scrupulous Christian of v. 3.

▣ “is condemned” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE from *kata + krinō*, meaning

1. “placed in a guilty light by contrast” (cf. Harold K. Moulton, *The analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 216)

2. “not condemnation, but the punishment following sentence” (cf. Rom. 5:16,18; 8:1 [cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 328])

Here it refers to the violation of one’s conscience and the resulting pain associated with the convicting of the Holy Spirit.

▣ **“if he eats”** This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE.

▣ **“and whatever is not from faith is sin”** In ambiguous biblical areas, sin is a violation of our conscience, not a violation of law. We must walk in the light we have—always open to more light from the Bible and the Spirit.

Believers’ understanding of God’s will (the sense of “faith” in this context) must determine their actions. It is possible for mature believers to hold different views on biblically ambiguous issues and both be in the will of God.

▣ Some Greek manuscripts have the doxology of 16:25-27 at the close of chapter 14. Some have it in both places. One papyri manuscript, P⁴⁶, has it at the close of chapter 15. There are six different locations of this doxology in the Greek manuscript tradition of Romans. For a full discussion consult, *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament* by Bruce M. Metzger, published by United Bible Societies, pp. 533-536. Here is a brief summary of the theories.

1. Origen said an early heretic in Rome, Marcion, removed the last two chapters of Romans. This would explain the doxology at chapter 14.
2. Other scholars speculate that Paul wrote one form of Romans to be sent to Rome, chapters 1-14, and later saw a need to send the same letter to Ephesus; chapters 1-16. The long list of personal greetings (chapter 16) reflects Ephesus, not Rome.
3. The greetings of chapter 16 were for believers on the way to Rome because Aquila and Priscilla are in Ephesus and are never recorded as returning to Rome.
4. The doxology was not original and was added by scribes later for liturgical purposes in public worship.

M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 2, is interesting.

“Against these theories is the stubborn fact that of the known extant MSS of Paul (about three hundred) all the MSS hitherto collated, including all the most important, give these chapters in the received connection and order, with the exception of the doxology” (p. 750).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the “weaker” brother? Does Paul imply they are immature?
2. How does Christian freedom relate to Christian responsibility?
3. Is everything in nature “clean” or morally neutral (vv. 14, 20)?
4. Why was the question of food so important at Corinth (cf. I Cor. 8, 10), remember Paul wrote Romans from Corinth?
5. Explain the relationship between knowledge, freedom, and love in this chapter.
6. On what should we base fellowship in the church?
7. On what do we base our individual choices and actions?
8. How do our actions affect others? What does this demand of us?
9. How do we determine proper Christian ethics?
10. Is it possible for mature Christians to disagree and both be acceptable to God?

ROMANS 15

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Please Your Fellow Men, Not Yourself	Bearing Others' Burdens	The Strong Should Bear the Weak	Please Others, Not Yourselves	(14:22-15:6)
15:1-6	15:1-6	15:1-6	15:1-6	
The Gospel for Gentiles and Jews Alike	Glorify God Together		The Gospel to the Gentiles	
15:7-13	15:7-13	15:7-13	15:7-12 15:13	15:7-12 15:13
Paul's Missionary Commission	From Jerusalem to Illyricum	Personal Notes	Paul's Reason for Writing So Boldly	Paul's Ministry
15:14-21	15:14-21	15:14-21	15:14-21	15:14-16 15:17-21
Paul's Plan to Visit Rome	Plan to Visit Rome		Paul's Plan to Visit Rome	Paul's Plans
15:22-29	15:22-33	15:22-29	15:22-29	15:22-26 15:27-29
15:30-33		15:30-33	15:30-33	15:30-33

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-13

- A. The discussion about Christian freedom and responsibility is continuing in 15:1-13 from chapter 14.
- B. The entire argument of 14:1-15:13 could be outlined as
 1. accept one another because God accepts us in Christ (cf. 14:1,3; 15:7)
 2. do not judge one another because Christ is our only Master and Judge (cf. 14:3-12)
 3. love is more important than personal freedom (cf. 14:13-23)
 4. follow Christ's example and lay down your rights for others' edification and good (cf. 15:1-13)
- C. 15:5-6 reflects the three-fold purpose of the entire context of 14:1-15:13
 1. live in harmony with one another
 2. live in accordance with Christ's example
 3. with unified hearts and lips offer united praise to God
- D. This same tension between personal freedom and corporate responsibility is dealt with in I Cor. 8-10.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:1-6

¹Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves. ²Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. ³For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME." ⁴For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, ⁶so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15:1

NASB	"Now we who are strong ought to bear the weakness of those without strength"
NKJV	"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak,"
NRSV	"We who are strong ought to put up with the failing of the weak"
TEV	"We who are strong in the faith ought to help the weak to carry their burdens"
NJB	"We who are strong have a duty to put up with the qualms of the weak"

These are two PRESENT INFINITIVES used in the sense of IMPERATIVES. The mentioning of the strong and weak shows that chapter 15 continued the discussion begun in 14:1. It seems to reflect the tension within the Roman Church, and all churches, on the way Christians live their lives in

1. biblically ambiguous areas
2. OT requirements
3. reactions to non-moral, cultural issues

A good book that has been very helpful to me in this area is Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*.

For modern English readers, to label the two perspectives "strong" and "weak" is to prejudice the groups. This was not Paul's intent. The strong group referred to those who had been freed from a rule or ritual-oriented religious life. Their relationship with God is not precariously dependent on performing certain tasks or avoiding certain religious taboos. The other group was also a fully Christian, and a fully accepted, and a fully committed group of believers. However, they viewed their faith through the religious ideas of their past

experiences. The Jewish believers tended to hold on to the Old Covenant practices of Judaism. The converted pagans tended to retain some of their old religious (pagan) ideas and practices. But notice that Paul did not call this mindset among believers “sin.” It is only when they violated their consciences that it became sin (cf. v. 23).

The term *adunatos*, “without strength” (cf. Acts 14:8) is connected to the term *astheneō* (cf. 14:1,21; I Cor. 8:7,10,11,12; 9:22), which also means “without strength.”

This text implies that Christians should not grudgingly tolerate other Christians, but should lovingly “care for” and “work with” each other. The term, “bear” was also used of Jesus’ “cross bearing” in John 19:17 and Luke 14:27. Paul knew the tensions that can occur between religious people. He was trained under Gamaliel, who was a rabbi of the liberal school of Hillel.

▣ **“and not just please ourselves”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act in process. Self-centeredness is a sure sign of immaturity; following Christ’s example (cf. v. 3; Phil. 2:1-11) is the sign of maturity. Again, it is the strong who were being addressed (cf. 14:1,14,16,21,27). This is not to imply they had all the responsibility in maintaining the fellowship. The weak are also addressed in 14:3, 20, 23; 15:5-6,7.

15:2 “Each of us is to please his neighbor” This is “neighbor” used in the sense of fellow Christian. This does not imply personal compromise of convictions, but that one does not push his personal preferences or opinions in the ambiguous areas. The unity and growth of the body of Christ, not personal freedom, is paramount (cf. I Cor. 9:19-23; 10:24-33; Eph. 4:1-16).

▣

NASB	“for his edification”
NKJV	“leading to edification”
NRSV	“for the good purpose of building up the neighbor”
TEV	“in order to build them up in the faith”
NJB	“help them to become stronger Christians”

This is the major theme of chapter 14 (cf. 14:16,19). It is also one of the tests for spiritual gifts found in I Cor. 10:23; 12:7; 14:26; Eph. 4:29.

In this context it refers to the stronger believer limiting his/her freedom in love for the purpose of helping fellow Christians grow in faith. Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Raymond E. Brown, ed., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2, has an interesting comment on this verse.

“This phrase is often taken to mean ‘to edify him’ (the neighbor), referring to the personal development of one’s Christian neighbor. But considering that Paul often uses the building metaphor in his letters in a corporate sense, the phrase undoubtedly has a social, corporate meaning, here as well (cf. I Cor. 14:12; Eph. 4:12; Rom. 14:19)” (p. 328).

SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY

This term *oikodomeō* and its other forms are used often by Paul. Literally it means “to build a house” (cf. Matt. 7:24), but it came to be used metaphorically for:

1. Christ’s body, the church, I Cor. 3:9; Eph. 2:21; 4:16
2. building up
 - a. weak brothers, Rom. 15:1
 - b. neighbors, Rom. 15:2

- c. one another, Eph. 4:29; I Thess. 5:11
- d. the saints for ministry, Eph. 4:11
- 3. we build up or edify by
 - a. love, I Cor. 8:1; Eph. 4:16
 - b. limiting personal freedoms, I Cor. 10:23-24
 - c. avoiding speculations, I Tim. 1:4
 - d. limiting speakers in worship services (singers, teachers, prophets, tongue speakers, and interpreters), I Cor. 14:3-4,12
- 4. all things should edify
 - a. Paul's authority, II Cor. 10:8; 12:19; 13:10
 - b. summary statements in Rom. 14:19 and I Cor. 14:26

15:3 “For even Christ” Christ is our pattern and example. This truth is also stressed in v. 5; Phil. 2:1-11; I Pet. 2:21; I John 3:16.

▣ **“it is written”** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, which is an idiom for OT Scripture. This is a quote from Psalm 69:9. By referring to Christ's example (did not please Himself, cf. Phil. 2:5-8) in addition to an OT quote, Paul uses the two most important sources of authority in the early church (cf. Newman and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans*, p. 271). The selflessness of Christ as He bore the sin of all the world is our example (cf. I John 3:16).

Paul seems to link

1. Jesus' bearing reproach as the Messiah
2. Paul bearing the reproach of the gospel

There is a price to pay for serving God in a fallen world.

1. the rejected and crucified Jesus
2. Paul tells of his rejection and persecution in II Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-33. Paul, too, was finally beheaded

15:4 “for whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction” The OT was written for NT believers also (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; I Cor. 9:10; 10:6,11). It is relevant to new covenant believers (cf. II Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17). There is a continuity, but also a discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments.

▣ **“so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures”** Notice how the truth of God's Word and believers' lifestyle response to it are combined. Faith and practice are bound together (cf. v. 5). They result in confidence in life, in death, and at the promised hope of Christ's return.

▣ **“we might have hope”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE, which implies our hope is dependant on the actions mentioned earlier in v. 4. In the NT “hope” often referred to the Second Coming when our salvation will be consummated (cf. Rom. 8:30; I John 3:2). This Greek term does not have the connotation of uncertainty as the English term. The Second Coming is a certain event with an uncertain time element.

Paul uses this term often in several different but related senses. Often it is associated with the consummation of the believer's faith. This can be expressed as glory, eternal life, ultimate salvation, Second Coming, etc. The consummation is certain but the time element is future and unknown. It is often associated

with “faith” and “love” (cf. I Cor. 13:13; I Thess. 1:3; II Thess. 2:16). A partial list of some of Paul’s uses are:

1. The Second Coming, Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18; 4:4; Titus 2:13
2. Jesus is our hope, I Tim. 1:1
3. Trust in the gospel, Col. 1:23
4. Ultimate salvation, Col. 1:5; I Thess. 4:13; 5:8
5. The glory of God, Rom. 5:2, II Cor. 3:12; Col. 1:27
6. Assurance of salvation, I Thess. 5:8
7. Eternal life, Titus 1:2; 3:7
8. Redemption of all creation, Rom. 8:20
9. Faith, Rom. 8:23-25, 15:4
10. Title of God, Rom. 15:13
11. Paul’s desire for believers, II Cor. 1:7

15:5 “may the God. . .grant” This is a rare AORIST ACTIVE OPTATIVE, which expresses a wish or prayer. Paul’s prayer, vv. 5-6, had two petitions.

1. to be in one mind (cf. 12:16; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2)
2. to be in one voice of praise (cf. vv. 6, 7,9)

▣ **“the God who gives perseverance and encouragement”** This is almost a descriptive title of God (cf. 15:13; I Cor. 1:3). These characteristics of God come to believers through the Scriptures (cf. v. 4). See Special Topic: The Need to Persevere at 8:25.

15:6 “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” This is Deity’s full NT title (cf. II Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:3; I Pet. 1:3; notice a similar title in 1:7). This is not the God of philosophical necessity, but of revelation. Notice the two titles of God in Paul’s prayer of vv. 5-6.

1. the God of perseverance and encouragement
2. the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

See Special Topics: Perseverance at 8:25 and Father at 1:7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:7-13

⁷Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. ⁸For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, ⁹and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, “THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME.” ¹⁰Again he says, “REJOICE, O GENTILES, WITH HIS PEOPLE.” ¹¹And again, “PRAISE THE LORD ALL YOU GENTILES, AND LET ALL THE PEOPLES PRAISE HIM.” ¹²Again Isaiah says, “THERE SHALL COME THE ROOT OF JESSE, AND HE WHO ARISES TO RULE OVER THE GENTILES, IN HIM SHALL THE GENTILES HOPE.” ¹³Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

15:7

NASB, TEV	“accept one another”
NKJV	“receive one another”
NRSV	“welcome one another”
NJB	“treat each other in the same friendly way”

This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. Believers must continue to accept one another because Christ accepted them! This same truth is found in 14:1. However, here it introduces a series of OT passages about God accepting Gentiles (cf. vv. 9-12). This may have reflected the tension within the Roman Church.

Christianity is characterized by a self-giving of believers to one another (cf. 1:12; 12:5,10,16; 13:8; 14:13,19; 15:5,7,14; 16:16).

▣ **“just as Christ also accepted us”** This is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE. Here is the motive and impetus of the believer’s actions toward others (cf. 14:3). In chapter 14 the focus was on

1. Christ as Master and Judge, vv. 1-12
2. Christ as our example of self-giving love, vv. 13-23

Christ accepted us, we must accept others!

▣ **“to the glory of God”** See note at 3:23.

15:8 “Christ has become a servant to the circumcision” Jesus is God’s fulfillment of OT prophecy (cf. Matt. 10:6; 15:24). This may be directed to the tension in the Roman church between believing Jews and believing Gentiles.

▣

NASB “on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers”

NKJV “for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers”

NRSV “on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs”

TEV “on behalf of the Jews, to show that God is faithful, to make his promises to their ancestors come true”

NJB “so that God could faithfully carry out the promises made to the patriarchs”

This probably relates to God’s OT covenant promises to Israel (cf. 4:16). However, it could refer to God’s promises to redeem all mankind (cf. Gen. 3:15, 12:3, Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 2:2-4; 56:7; 66:18-24). The mystery of the gospel is that God’s plan has always been the unifying of Jew and Gentile through Christ (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

The NT message is the fulfillment of OT hopes, not something totally new. Christ’s great mission was to (1) fulfill to Israel her promised hope and (2) open the door to the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 3:29-30; 9:30; 10:11-12,16-20; 11:25,32; 16:25; Eph. 2:11-3:21). As Israel had failed in her evangelistic mission to reveal God and to attract the Gentiles to faith, Jesus empowers a new spiritual Israel (cf. 9:6; Gal. 6:16) to accomplish this universal task (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; John 3:16; Acts 1:8).

▣ **“confirm”** See Special Topic at 4:16.

15:9-12 This is a series of OT quotes to show that the Gentiles have always been a part of God’s plan (see Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 1:5, cf. 10:16-20). This is a series of OT quotes from

1. v. 9 – Ps. 18:49 or II Sam. 22:50
2. v. 10 – Deut. 32:43
3. v. 11 – Ps. 117:1
4. v. 12 – Isa. 11:1,10

Notice there is a quote from each section of the Hebrew canon: Law, Prophets, and Writings.

15:9 “to glorify God for His mercy” God’s mercy is the theological key to Roman’s predestination (cf. 9:15,16,18,23) and Gentile inclusion (cf. 11:30,31,32; 15:9). It is God’s mercy that saved Israel. It is God’s

mercy that saves believing Gentiles. The mechanism is not human performance (cf. Romans 9), but the gracious, unchanging character of God (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8,4; Joel 2:13) and the promise of Messiah (cf. Isa. 11:1,10).

It is interesting that the Gentiles “glorify” God by

1. confession/praise
2. singing

When a believer sings to God, he is confessing/professing! Hymns, like creeds, are a valid way of confessing (cf. 10:9-13).

15:13 “May the God of hope” This was a closing doxology to the literary unit begun in 14:1. This was another wonderful title for Deity—the God of hope.

15:13 “fill you with all joy and peace” This is an AORIST ACTIVE OPTATIVE, denoting Paul’s prayer for the believers at Rome. Notice the presence of “all”(cf. 5:1-2; 14:17).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

“in believing,”

TEV

“by means of your faith in Him”

NJB

“in your faith”

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INFINITIVE. This expresses the confidence of perseverance by means of continuing faith in Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, resting in personal joy and peace. Faith in Christ is not only an initial response but lifestyle response.

▣ **“so that you will abound in hope”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INFINITIVE of *perisseuō*, which basically means “over and above.” For “hope” see note at 15:4.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOUND (*perisseuō*)

Paul uses this term often.

1. The truth of God abounded to His glory, Rom. 3:7
2. The free gift in the grace of that one man, Jesus Christ, abounded, Rom. 5:15
3. Believers abound in hope, Rom. 15:13
4. Believers are not commended to God by eating or not eating certain foods, I Cor. 8:8
5. Believers abound in building up the church, I Cor. 14:12
6. Believers abound in the work of the Lord, I Cor. 15:58
7. Believers share abundantly in Christ’s suffering and abundantly in Christ’s comfort, II Cor. 1:5
8. The ministry of righteousness abounds in glory, II Cor. 3:9
9. Believers’ thanksgiving is to abound to the glory of God, II Cor. 4:15
10. Believers’ abundance of joy, II Cor. 8:2
11. Believers abound in everything (faith, utterance, knowledge, earnestness, and love), also in the gift for the Jerusalem church, II Cor. 8:7
12. All grace abounds to believers, II Cor. 9:8
13. Believers’ abundant thanksgiving to God, II Cor. 9:12
14. The riches of God’s grace is lavished on believers, Eph. 1:8
15. Believers’ love may abound still more and more, Phil. 1:9

16. Believers' confidence in Paul abound in Christ, Phil. 1:26
17. Having abundance, Phil. 4:12,18
18. Believers overflowing with gratitude, Col. 2:7
19. Believers increase and abound in love for one another, I Thess. 3:12
20. Abound in godly lifestyle, I Thess. 4:1
21. Abound in love for fellow believers, I Thess. 4:10

Paul's understanding of the grace of God in Christ was "over and above," so too, is the need for believers to walk in this "over and above" grace and love in their daily lives!

▣ **"by the power of the Holy Spirit"** The Holy Spirit is the Person of the Trinity active in this New Age. Nothing of lasting value or effect occurs without Him (cf. 15:19; I Cor. 2:4; I Thess. 1:5). See Special Topics at 8:9 and 8:11.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the central truth of Romans 14:1-15:13?
2. Why does Paul quote the OT passages in verses 9-12? What great truth do they teach?

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 14-33

- A. In many ways the close of this letter is similar to its opening, 1:8-15
 1. it extols their faith (cf. 1:8)
 2. it defends Paul's apostleship of the gospel to the Gentiles (cf. 1:13,14)
 3. it asserts Paul's desire to visit them (cf. 1:10,13)
 4. it expresses Paul's desire that they would help him on his way to other regions not yet evangelized (Spain, cf. 1:13)
- B. Again, there is a hint of the tension in the Roman Church between believing Jews and believing Gentiles which has been alluded to or hinted at throughout the letter, but especially chapters 9-11, 14:1-15:13.
- C. Also there is a hint of the tension in the early church concerning Paul's apostolic standing. He seems to defend himself in vv. 15-19; 1:2,5.
- D. This literary unit contains two topics.
 1. Paul's apostolic, evangelistic, Gentile-oriented ministry (cf. vv. 14-21)
 2. Paul's travel plans to accomplish this purpose may take him through Rome (cf. vv. 22-33)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:14-21

¹⁴And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another. ¹⁵But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, ¹⁶to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest of the gospel of God, so that *my* offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. ¹⁸For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, ¹⁹in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. ²⁰And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was *already* named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; ²¹but as it is written, "THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND."

15:14

NASB "And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced"

NKJV "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren"

NRSV "I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters"

TEV "My friends: I myself feel sure that you"

NJB "It is not because I have any doubts about you, my brothers, on the contrary I am quite certain that you"

The "I" (*auto egō*) is very emphatic in Greek. Paul is truly complimenting this church ("convinced," PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE).

Paul asserts three things about these Roman Christians in v. 14.

1. they are full of goodness (PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE)
2. they are full of knowledge (PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE)
3. they are able to admonish one another PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE

This verse implies that Paul is not bringing a new message to them, but explaining and clarifying the good news which they already had heard and accepted (cf. v. 15).

▣ "you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all" As the "I myself" is emphatic in the first phrase, "you yourselves" is emphatic here. The term "full" (*mestos*) means "full of" or "replete." Paul used this term only twice, both times in Romans (1:29; 15:14).

The term "filled" (*plēroō*) is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. Paul used this term often in Romans (cf. 1:29; 8:4; 13:8; 15:13,14,19). He also uses the NOUN *plērōma* often in Romans (cf. 11:12,25; 13:10; 15:29), but never the ADJECTIVE in any of his writings.

It was Paul's desire that a full gospel completely fill believers to overflow in love and service. Believers have all they need in Christ. They need to fully accept and receive this assurance.

▣ "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge" There are two ways to understand these terms: (1) that they relate contextually to the immediately preceding literary unit of 14:1-15:13—the believer's love for each other amidst the differences between Christians in the ambiguous biblical areas. This may be confirmed by the general use of the term "good" in 14:16; 15:2 and here or (2) that it relate to the whole gospel of faith and practice, orthodoxy, and orthopraxy.

▣ **“able to admonish one another”** The church is designed by God to encourage and admonish each other (cf. I Cor. 12:7; Col. 3:16; I Thess. 5:14; II Thess. 3:15). We are saved to serve, to serve God by serving one another! We are to live for the health and growth of the body!

15:15 “I have written very boldly to you” Paul wrote his letter to the Romans from Corinth. He was attacked by one of the factions in that church for being bold in his letters, but weak in person. This VERB form of the word “boldly” is found in II Cor. 10:2,12; 11:21. Paul’s boldness came from his conversion, call, and knowledge of the gospel.

▣ **“because of the grace that was given me from God”** Paul refers to the grace of God (cf. 1:5; 12:3; I Cor. 3:10; 15:10; Gal. 2:9; and Eph. 3:7-8) which called him, saved him, gifted him, and sent him to the Gentiles (cf. 11:13; 15:16). It is a way of asserting his apostleship and authority (cf. 1:1,5).

15:16 “minister. . .ministering. . .offering. . .acceptable” Verses 16 and 17 contain several priestly terms and phrases. “Minister” is used of priestly service in v. 27. It is used of Christ’s service in Heb. 8:2. Paul saw himself as a priest (cf. Phil. 2:17) offering the Gentiles to God, which was Israel’s task (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 66:20). The church has been given this evangelistic assignment (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). The church is called by OT priesthood terms in I Pet. 2:5,9 and Rev. 1:6.

▣ **“the gospel of God** It is not only the gospel of Jesus (cf. Mark 1:1; Rom. 1:16; 15:19; I Cor. 9:12,18; II Cor. 2:12; 4:4; 9:13; 10:14; Gal. 1:7, etc.), but also can rightfully be called “the gospel of God” (cf. Mark 1:14; Rom. 15:16; II Cor. 11:7; I Thess. 2:2,8,9; I Pet. 4:17). It is the culmination of the heart of God promised from Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6 and prophesied so often in Isaiah (i.e., Isa. 2:2-4; 51:4,5).

▣ **“sanctified by the Holy Spirit”** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE meaning, “have been and continue to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” This may again reflect the tension between Jewish and Gentile believers in the Roman church. Paul stated clearly that the nations (Gentiles) had been and continue to be fully accepted and consecrated by the Holy Spirit (cf. I Cor. 6:11).

15:17-19 Notice the unified action of the Triune God: to God (cf. v.17); in Christ (cf. v. 17); and in the power of the Spirit (cf. v. 19). Notice also the three Persons of the godhead in v. 30. Although the term “Trinity” is not biblical, the concept is (cf. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; Acts 2:33-34; Rom. 8:9-10; I Cor. 12:4-6; II Cor. 1:21; 13:14; Eph. 1:3-14; 4:4-6; Titus 3:4-6; I Pet. 1:2). See Special Topic: The Trinity at 8:11.

15:18-19 Paul listed the different ways his Gentile ministry had been effective (1) by word; (2) by deed; (3) in signs; (4) in wonders; and (5) all through the power of the Spirit.

Just a note about a manuscript variation related to #5, “the Spirit” (i.e., MS B): some Greek texts add “the Holy Spirit” (i.e., MSS A, D*), some have “the Spirit of God” (i.e., MSS P⁴⁶, N, D¹). As with so many of these variations, this addition, or uninspired clarification, does not affect the truth of the passage. It was usually an attempt to standardize the phrasing of the NT by later scribes who copied the text. UBS⁴ gives “Spirit of God” a “C” rating (difficulty in deciding).

15:18 “resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles” God’s goal has always been a people who reflect His character. The gospel of Jesus restores the image of God lost in the Fall of Genesis 3. Intimate fellowship with God is evidenced by godly character. The goal of Christianity is fellowship with God and Christlikeness, now!

▣ **“by word and deed”** This referred to Paul’s ministry, not the obedience of the Roman Christians. It is obviously linked to the power of the Spirit in v. 19.

15:19 “in the power of signs and wonders” These two terms appear together many times in Acts (cf. 14:8-10; 16:16-18, 25-26; 20:9-12; 28:8-9), describing God’s power working through the gospel (cf. II Cor. 12:12). They appear to be synonymous. Exactly to what this referred—miracles or conversion—is uncertain. Here again, this may be a hint at the tension over Paul’s apostleship. As God confirmed the work of the Twelve in Jerusalem, He also confirmed the work of Paul among the Gentiles by means of observable signs.

▣ **“I have fully preached the gospel of Christ”** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INFINITIVE of *plēroō* (cf. v. 14). This implies that Paul believed he had finished his preaching task in the eastern Mediterranean (cf. v. 23).

▣ **“as far as Illyricum”** This Roman province, also known as Dalmatia, was located on the eastern side of the Adriatic Sea north west of the Grecian peninsula (Macedonia). Acts never records Paul as preaching there but it does put him in the area (cf. 20:1-2). “As far as” could mean “on the border of” or “in the region of.”

15:20 “And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was *already* named” This was Paul’s consistent missionary strategy (cf. I Cor. 3:10; II Cor. 10:15-16). He wanted to reach the pagans who had never had the chance to hear and receive the gospel. He usually picked large, strategically located cities of the Roman Empire so that the established church could evangelize and disciple their surrounding areas.

15:21 This is a quote from the Septuagint (LXX) of Isa. 52:15 which speaks of the Gentiles hearing about God. Paul chose this prophecy as his missionary strategy.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:22-29

²²For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; ²³but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you ²⁴whenever I go to Spain— for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while—²⁵but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. ²⁶For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. ²⁷Yes, they were pleased *to do so*, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. ²⁸Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain. ²⁹I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

15:22 “For this reason” This reason is explained in v. 20.

▣ **“I have often been prevented”** This is an IMPERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. He was prevented again and again (cf. 1:13). The agency was not stated. It could have been God, Satan, evil people, or other gospel opportunities.

Remember Paul wrote Romans while he was in Corinth. In Corinth Paul’s opponents attacked him because he had not been able to fulfill his travel plans. Paul was surely affected by the attacks from within the Corinthian church. He may have mentioned that his travel plan had been thwarted again and again.

15:23 “but now, with no further place for me in these regions” This verse must be taken in the limited geographical sense of Asia Minor or the Eastern Mediterranean area. Paul had not preached to everyone, everywhere in these areas, but only to some.

▣ **“and since I have had for many years a longing to come to see you”** Paul had often expressed his desire to visit Rome (cf. 1:10-15; Acts 19:21; 23:11).

There is a Greek manuscript variant at this point that is not listed in the UBS⁴ critical footnotes. The ancient Greek manuscripts MSS P⁴⁶, **ℵ**, A, D, F, G & L have “many” (*polus*) which is used in v. 22, but MSS B, C & P have “several” (*ikanos*). Possibly later scribes were bothered by Paul’s overstatement.

15:24 “whenever I go to Spain” Paul wanted to go to the western region of the Roman Empire (cf. II Cor. 10:16). He was released from Roman imprisonment after the close of Acts and went on a fourth missionary journey. The Pastorals (I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus) were written on this fourth journey. There is possibly a reference to this in II Tim. 4:10 where some Greek uncial manuscripts, **ℵ**, C and the Latin Vulgate and Coptic translations, have “Gaul.” Clement of Rome (see Ad. Cor. 5:7), who wrote before the end of the first century, in his “Letter to the Corinthians,” 5:7, also asserts that Paul traveled to the “bounds of the West.”

▣ **“and to be helped on my way there by you,”** This phrase became a technical idiom in the church for helping itinerant missionaries to their next preaching destination (cf. Acts 15:3; I Cor. 16:6, 11; II Cor. 1:16; Titus 3:13; III John 6). Rome was not able to contribute to the relief fund for the church in Jerusalem, but they could be a financial help for Paul’s missionary travels to the west.

15:25 “serving the saints” This term is often used in connection with raising money (cf. v. 31; I Cor. 16:15; II Cor. 8:4; 9:1). See Special Topic: Saints at 1:7.

15:26 “a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem” Paul had been receiving this collection (see Special Topic: *Koinōnia* at 12:13) for several years from (1) Galatia and Asia Minor (cf. I Cor. 16:1-4), and (2) Macedonia and Achaia (cf. II Corinthians 8-9). He got the idea from the church at Antioch (cf. Acts 11:30; 12:25). It was meant to help unify the two wings of the early church—Jew and Gentile. The Gentile churches are described as “delighted” to do it (cf. vv. 26 and 27). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUNGER

I. Introduction

- A. Hunger is one ever-present reminder of the fallen condition of humanity and creation.
- B. hunger is one aspect of the problem of evil and suffering. It is directly attributed to mankind, not God. Although God used agricultural blessings or cursings as a way to reward and punish His Covenant People (Deuteronomy 27-28), this has not been true for unbelievers in general (Matt. 5:45). Hunger is one more example of greedy, selfish, materialistic humanity. The problem of hunger is not really one of food, but of human motivation and priorities.
- C. Hunger is an opportunity for redeemed humanity to reflect God’s love. Believers’ reactions to physical need in the Church and in the world shows who we really are.

II. Biblical Material

A. Old Testament

1. Moses

- a. one of the three possible tithes in ancient Israel was for the poor (Deut. 14:28-29)
- b. the Law provided special provisions for the poor to eat (Exod. 23:11; Lev. 19:10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-22)

- c. the Law provided for special, inexpensive sacrifices for the poor (Lev. 14:21)
- d. Israel was to have a compassionate and open-handed attitude toward the poor and needy (Deut. 15:7-11, cf. Job 29:16; 30:25; 31:16-23)

2. Wisdom Literature

- a. There were special blessings reserved for those who helped the poor (Ps. 41:4)
- b. To help the poor was to help God (Pro. 14:31; 17:5; 19:17)

3. The Prophets

- a. God demanded worship to Him in the form of social justice and compassion to the needy (Isa. 58:6-7; Mic. 6:8)
- b. One sign of God's message was that it was proclaimed to the poor and needy (Isa. 61:1-2)
- c. God's prophets railed against social exploitation (Amos 2:6-8; 5:10-13; Micah)

B. New Testament

1. The Gospels

- a. Help for the poor is admonished (Mark 10:21; Luke 3:11)
- b. Judgment is based on our social love towards others in Jesus name. In fact, to help others is to help Jesus (Matt. 25:31-46)
- c. Mark 14:7 has been badly misunderstood when it is asserted that this reflects Jesus' lack of concern for the poor. This verse is meant to emphasize His uniqueness, not a put-down to the poor.
- d. Isaiah 61:1-2 reflects that the recipients of God's message will be the socially ostracized (Luke 4:18; 7:22; 14:21).

2. Paul

- a. Paul learned from Antioch of Syria the concept of a special love offering for the poor of the Jerusalem church (Rom. 15:26; I Cor. 16:1; II Cor. 8:4,6,19; Gal. 2).
- b. Paul emphasizes grace, faith, and works (Eph. 2:8-10).

3. James (NT Wisdom Literature)

- a. Faith in God through Christ without social concern is sick (James 2:14-17).
- b. He even says that faith without works is dead!

4. John

- a. The book of I John asserts that Christian assurance is based on a changed life of faith and service (I John 3:17-18).

III. Conclusion

A. Human misery and need are related to humanity's sin. There are several aspects to hunger:

- 1. foolish behavior (Pro. 19:15)
- 2. punishment of God (Deut. 27-28)
- 3. related to spiritual service (II Cor. 11:27)
- 4. cultural circumstances (greed, conception, etc).
- 5. material circumstances (famine, floods, hail, etc).

B. God really cares for people. He loves those in need in a unique way!

C. The Church in action is God's answer to human need (physical and spiritual)

- 1. direct, personal action

- 2. corporate parish/church action
- 3. political organization for change
- D. We must critically evaluate our culture and personal priorities in light of the Scriptures (II Corinthians 8-9).
- E. We need our eyes, hearts, and hands opened to human need at home and abroad; in the church and in the world.
- F. Help must be related to who we are in Christ in light of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). Help must be physical and spiritual.

15:27 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which was assumed to be true from the writer’s perspective or for his literary purpose. If the Gentiles share in the spiritual blessings of the Jews (cf. Rom. 10-11) they should help in the physical need of the mother church in Jerusalem.

15:28

- NASB** “when I have furnished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs”
- NKJV** “when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit”
- NRSV** “when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected”
- TEV** “when I have finished this task and have turned over to them all the money that has been raised for them”
- NJB** “So when I have done this and officially handed over what has been raised”

This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE and an AORIST MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. This literally alludes to the common way of sealing a package to assure the safety of its contents. This may be a way for Paul to assert that all the money given would be sent and received. To assure this he also took with him several representatives from the contributing churches (cf. Acts 20:4).

For “seal” see Special Topic at 4:11.

15:29 Notice the word *plēroō / plērōma* is used again. See note at v. 14.

▣ **“of the blessing of Christ”** This phrase refers to the blessing that the preaching/teaching of the gospel brings. It does not refer to a prayer in this context.

Some ancient Greek texts tried to clarify this understanding by adding a phrase, “the blessing of the gospel of Christ” (MS A², NKJV). The shorter text is found in MSS \aleph^* , A, B, C, D, F, G, P. The UBS⁴ gives the shorter reading an “A” rating (certain).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:30-33

³⁰Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, ³¹that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and *that* my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; ³²so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find *refreshing* rest in your company. ³³Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

15:30 “I urge you. . .to strive together with me” These are strong Greek terms. The first is also used in 12:1. The second is used of Jesus’ struggle in Gethsemane. Paul sensed a deep need for prayer for himself and his gospel ministry (cf. II Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:3; I Thess. 5:25; II Thess. 3:1). His experience

in Jerusalem proved to be difficult (cf. v. 31). He arrived in Rome, but not in the way he had envisioned. See Special Topic: Intercessory Prayer at 9:3.

15:30-33 Paul's prayer expresses three desires.

1. that he might be delivered from his enemies in Judah (cf. Acts 20:22-23)
2. that the gift from the Gentile churches would be received well by the church in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15:1ff; 21:17ff)
3. that he might then come visit Rome on his way to Spain

15:30 “to strive together with me” This term is used only here in the NT. It is a compound of *sun* (together with) and *agōnizomai* (to contend, to fight, to strive earnestly, cf. I Cor. 9:25; Col. 1:29; 4:12; I Tim. 4:10; 6:12). This strong INFINITIVE calls on the Roman church to aggressively agonize with Paul in prayer about the reception of the Gentile offering by the mother church in Jerusalem.

15:31 “who are disobedient” This refers to the Jewish opposition or possibly the Judaizers, but not the church in general (cf. 11:30,31).

15:32 Paul's prayer ends with two more requests: (1) he might come to them in joy and (2) he might have a time of rest with them (AORIST MIDDLE [deponent] SUBJUNCTIVE of *sunanapauomai*, only here in the NT, but used in Isa. 11:6. Paul quoted Isa. 11:1,10 in v. 12). Paul needs a time of quiet rest and recuperation among mature believers (cf. II Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-33)! He did not get it, however. Arrest and trials and years in prison awaited him in Palestine.

This verse has many manuscript variants.

15:33 “the God of peace” This is a wonderful title for God (cf. 16:20; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; I Thess. 5:23; II Thess. 3:16; Heb. 13:20).

▣ **“Amen”** See Special Topic at 1:25.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is the OT a benefit to NT believers (vv. 4-5; I Cor. 10:6,11)?
2. Why does Paul quote the OT in vv. 9-12? What great truth do they teach?
3. Where in this section of Romans does the tension between Jew and Gentile possibly appear?
4. Where in this section of Romans does the tension about Paul's apostleship appear?
5. What was Paul's reason for the offering of the Gentile churches for the church in Jerusalem (vv. 15-28)?
6. What was Paul's missionary strategy? Why did he want to go to Spain?
7. How and why does Paul describe his work as that of a priest (v.16) relating to Israel as a Kingdom of Priests (Exod. 19:5-6) or to the church (I. Pet. 2: 5,9; Rev. 1:6)?
8. Did God answer Paul's prayer of verses 30-33?

ROMANS 16

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
UBS⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Personal Greetings	Sister Phoebe Recommended	Greetings	Personal Greetings	Greetings and Good Wishes
16:1-2	16:1-2	16:1-2	16:1-2	16:1-2
	Greeting Roman Saints			
16:3-16	16:3-16	16:3-16	16:3-5a	16:3-5a
			16:5b-7	16:5b-16
			16:8-11	
			16:12-15	
			16:16	
	Avoid Divisive Persons		Final Instructions	A Warning and First Postscript
16:17-20	16:17-20	16:17-20	16:17-20a	16:17-20
			16:20b-21	
	Greetings From Paul's Friends			Last Greetings and Second Postscript
16:21-23	16:21-24	16:21		16:21-23
		16:22	16:22	
		16:23	16:23	
Doxology	Benediction		Concluding Prayer of Praise	Doxology
16:25-27	16:25-27	16:25-27	16:25-26	16:25-27
			16:27	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. viii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO VERSES 1-27

A. Notice that all of the women in this closing section were fellow-workers with Paul in the gospel (cf. Phil. 4:3): Phoebe in v. 1; Prisca in v. 3; Mary in v. 6; Junia (or Junias—if so it was a man) in v. 7; Tryphaena and Tryphosa in v. 12; Persis in v. 12; “his mother” in v. 13; Julia in v. 15; and “his sister” in v. 15. Be careful of dogmatism in the area of women in ministry. All believers are gifted (cf. I Cor. 12:7,11), full-time ministers (cf. Eph. 4:12).

In this list we have a woman deacon, Phoebe, and a possible woman-apostle, Junia (cf. Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16-21). It is difficult to know how to handle this issue biblically because of the seemingly paradoxical statements of Paul such as I Cor. 11:4-5 compared with 14:34.

B. Notice the possible racial backgrounds of these names

1. believing Jews: Aquila, Prisca, Andronicus, Junias, Mary [some MSS have Mariam];
2. Roman noble family names: Prisca, Ampliatus, Apelles, Narcissus, Julia, Philologus;
3. Jewish noble family names: Aristobulus, Herodion.

C. Verses 1-16 are Paul’s personal greetings, while verse 17-20 are his closing warnings against false teachers. In verses 21-23 the mission team sends greetings from Corinth.

D. The discussion of chapter 16 in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary* by F. F. Bruce is very helpful. If you are interested in a detailed study of the names found in this chapter, read pages 266-284.

E. There is some doubt about where the letter closes. A closing appears several times at the end of chapters 14, 15 (MS P⁴⁶) and 16, in the ancient Greek manuscripts. However, the traditional close of 16:25-27 appears in MSS P⁶¹, **ℵ**, B, C and D as well as the Greek text used by Clement of Rome (A.D. 95).

Verse 24 does not appear in the older Greek manuscripts, P⁴⁶, P⁶¹, **ℵ**, A, B, C, nor the Latin Vulgate or the Greek text used by Origen of Alexandria. For a full discussion of the variants see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 533-536.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:1-2

¹I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; ²that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.

16:1 “I commend to you” Verses 1-2 function as a letter of recommendation for deaconess Phoebe. She probably carried Paul’s letter to Rome. There are several other examples of these letters of introduction or recommendation in the NT (cf. Acts 18:27; I Cor. 16:3; II Cor. 3:1; 8:18-24; and Phil. 2:19-30).

▣ **“Phoebe”** Her name meant “bright” or “radiant.”



NASB, NKJV “who is a servant of the church”
NRSV “a deacon of the church”
TEV “who serves the church”
NJB “a deaconess of the church”

This is the term *diakonos*. It is an ACCUSATIVE SINGULAR FEMININE form. It is the Greek term for minister/servant. It is used (1) of Christ in 15:8; Mark 10:45; (2) of Paul in Eph. 3:7; Col. 1:23,25; and (3) of deacons in Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:11.

There is evidence in both the NT and early post-biblical church writings for the office of deaconess. Another example of women in local church ministry in the NT is “the widows’ roll” of the Pastorals (cf. I Tim. 3:11; 5:3-16). The RSV, Amplified, and Phillips translations have “deaconess” in 16:1. The NASB and NIV have it in the footnotes. The NEB has “who holds office.” All believers are called, gifted, full-time ministers (cf. Eph. 4:12). Some are called to leadership ministry roles. Our traditions must give way to Scripture! These early deacons and deaconesses were servants, not executive boards.

M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 2, pp. 752 and 1196, says that the *Apostolical Constitutions*, dating from the late second or early third century, makes a distinction between the duties and ordination of female church helpers.

1. deaconesses
2. widows (cf. I Tim. 3:11; 5:9-10)
3. virgins (cf. Acts 21:9 and possibly I Cor. 7:34)

These duties involved

1. caring for the sick
2. caring for those physically persecuted
3. visiting those in prison for the faith
4. teaching new believers
5. assisting in baptism of women
6. some overseeing of female church members

SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

I. The Old Testament

A. Culturally women were considered property

1. included in list of property (Exodus 20:17)
2. treatment of slave women (Exodus 21:7-11)
3. women’s vows annulable by socially responsible male (Numbers 30)
4. women as spoils of war (Deuteronomy 20:10-14; 21:10-14)

B. Practically there was a mutuality

1. male and female made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27)
2. honor father and mother (Exodus 20:12 [Deut. 5:16])
3. reverence mother and father (Leviticus 19:3; 20:9)
4. men and women could be Nazirites (Numbers 6:1-2)
5. daughters have right of inheritance (Numbers 27:1-11)
6. part of covenant people (Deuteronomy 29:10-12)
7. observe teaching of father and mother (Proverbs 1:8; 6:20)

8. sons and daughters of Heman (Levite family) led music in Temple (I Chronicles 25:5-6)
9. sons and daughters will prophesy in new age (Joel 2:28-29)

C. Women were in leadership roles

1. Moses' sister, Miriam, called a prophetess (Exodus 15:20-21 also note Micah 6:4)
2. women gifted by God to weave material for the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:25-26)
3. a woman, Deborah, also a prophetess (cf. Jdgs. 4:4), led all the tribes (Judges 4:4-5; 5:7)
4. Huldah was a prophetess whom King Josiah invoked to read and interpret the newly-found "Book of the Law" (II Kings 22:14; II Chr. 34:22-27)
5. Queen Esther, a godly woman, saved Jews in Persia

II. The New Testament

A. Culturally women in both Judaism and the Greco-Roman world were second class citizens with few rights or privileges (the exception was Macedonia).

B. Women in leadership roles

1. Elizabeth and Mary, godly women available to God (Luke 1-2)
2. Anna, godly woman serving at the Temple (Luke 2:36)
3. Lydia, believer and leader of a house church (Acts 16:14,40)
4. Philip's four virgin daughters were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9)
5. Phoebe, deaconess of church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1)
6. Prisca (Priscilla), Paul's fellow-worker and teacher of Apollos (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3)
7. Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, Nereus' sister, several women co-workers of Paul (Rom. 16:6-16)
8. Junia (KJV), possibly a woman apostle (Rom. 16:7)
9. Euodia and Syntyche, co-workers with Paul (Phil. 4:2-3)

III. How does a modern believer balance the divergent biblical examples?

A. How does one determine historical or cultural truths, which apply only to the original context, from eternal truths valid for all churches, all believers of all ages?

1. We must take the intent of the original inspired author very seriously. The Bible is the Word of God and the only source for faith and practice.
2. We must deal with the obviously historically-conditioned inspired texts.
 - a. the cultus (i.e., ritual and liturgy) of Israel (cf. Acts 15; Gal. 3)
 - b. first century Judaism
 - c. Paul's obviously historically-conditioned statements in I Corinthians
 - (1) the legal system of pagan Rome (I Cor. 6)
 - (2) remaining a slave (I Cor. 7:20-24)
 - (3) celibacy (I Cor. 7:1-35)
 - (4) virgins (I Cor. 7:36-38)
 - (5) food sacrificed to an idol (I Cor. 8; 10:23-33)
 - (6) unworthy actions at Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11)
3. God fully and clearly revealed Himself to a particular culture, a particular day. We must take seriously the revelation, but not every aspect of its historical accommodation. The Word of God was written in human words, addressed to a particular culture at a particular time.

B. Biblical interpretation must seek the original author's intent. What was he saying to his day? This is foundational and crucial for proper interpretation. But then we must apply this to our own day. Now, here is the problem with women in leadership (the real interpretive problem may be defining the term. Were there more ministries than pastors who were seen as leadership? Were deaconesses or prophetesses seen as leaders?) It is quite clear that Paul, in I Cor. 14:34-35 and I Tim. 2:9-15, is asserting that women should not take the lead in public worship! But how do I apply that today? I do not want Paul's culture or my culture to silence God's Word and will. Possibly Paul's day was too limiting, but also my day may be too open. I feel so uncomfortable saying that Paul's words and teachings are conditional, first century, local situational truths. Who am I that I should let my mind or my culture negate an inspired author?!

However, what do I do when there are biblical examples of women leaders (even in Paul's writings, cf. Romans 16)? A good example of this is Paul's discussion of public worship in I Corinthians 11-14. In 11:5 he seems to allow women's preaching and praying in public worship with their heads covered, yet in 14:34-35 he demands they remain silent! There were deaconesses (cf. Rom. 16:1) and prophetesses (cf. Acts 21:9). It is this diversity that allows me freedom to identify Paul's comments (as relates to restrictions on women) as limited to first century Corinth and Ephesus. In both churches there were problems with women exercising their newly-found freedom (cf. Bruce Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*), which could have caused difficulty for the church in reaching their society for Christ. Their freedom had to be limited so that the gospel could be more effective.

My day is just the opposite of Paul's. In my day the gospel might be limited if articulate, trained women are not allowed to share the gospel, not allowed to lead! What is the ultimate goal of public worship? Is it not evangelism and discipleship? Can God be honored and pleased with women leaders? The Bible as a whole seems to say "yes"!

I want to yield to Paul; my theology is primarily Pauline. I do not want to be overly influenced or manipulated by modern feminism! However, I feel the church has been slow to respond to obvious biblical truths, like the inappropriateness of slavery, racism, bigotry, and sexism. It has also been slow to respond appropriately to the abuse of women in the modern world. God in Christ set free the slave and the woman. I dare not let a culture-bound text reshackle them.

One more point: as an interpreter I know that Corinth was a very disrupted church. The charismatic gifts were prized and flaunted. Women may have been caught up in this. I also believe that Ephesus was being affected by false teachers who were taking advantage of women and using them as surrogate speakers in the house churches of Ephesus.

C. Suggestions for further reading

How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart (pp. 61-77)

Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics by Gordon Fee

Hard Sayings of the Bible by Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Branch (pp. 613-616; 665-667)

▣ "church" See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHURCH (*EKKLESIA*)

This Greek term, *ekklesia*, is from two words, “out of” and “called,” therefore, the term implies the divinely called-out ones. The early church took this word from secular use (cf. Acts 19:32,39,41) and because of the Septuagint’s use of this term for “congregation” of Israel (*Qahal*, BDB 874, cf. Num. 16:3; 20:4). They used it for themselves as a continuation of the OT people of God. They were the new Israel (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6), the fulfillment of God’s worldwide mission (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

This term is used in several senses in the Gospels and Acts.

1. secular town meeting, Acts 19:32,39,41
2. universal people of God in Christ, Matt. 16:18 and Ephesians
3. a local congregation of believers in Christ, Matt. 18:17; Acts 5:11 (in these verses the church in Jerusalem)
4. the people of Israel collectively, Acts 7:38, in Stephen’s sermon
5. the people of God in a region, Acts 8:3 (Judah or Palestine)

▣ **“Cenchraea”** This was one of two seaports of Corinth. This one was on the eastern side (cf. Acts 18:18).

16:2 “that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy” This is an AORIST MIDDLE [deponent] SUBJUNCTIVE of *prosdechomai*, which means “to receive kindly as a guest” (cf. Phil. 2:29). Paul trusted this lady and wanted the church to receive her and help her on his behalf. The very fact that he needed to say this shows the cultural climate.

▣ **“saints”** This term means “holy ones.” It describes not only a believers’ position in Jesus, but also hopefully their godly lives, progressively characterizing their new holy position in Christ. The term “saint” is always in the PLURAL except once in Philippians (4:21) and even there it is in a corporate sense. To be a Christian is to be part of a believing community, a family, a body. The modern church in the west has depreciated this corporate aspect of biblical faith! See Special Topic: Saints at 1:7.

▣ **“help her in whatever matter she may have need of you”** There are two SUBJUNCTIVES. The first, *paristēmi* (AORIST ACTIVE), means “to stand by so as to aid.” The second, *chrēzō* (PRESENT ACTIVE), means “to help with whatever is required” (cf. II Cor. 3:1).

This referred to material provisions for itinerant ministers. This was the purpose of letters of recommendation.

▣

NASB, NKJV **“has been a helper of many”**
NRSV **“has been a benefactor of many”**
TEV **“for she herself has been a good friend to many people”**
NJB **“has looked after a great many people”**

This term, *proistatis*, is found only here in the NT. This could have referred to physical or financial help. This word originally referred to a wealthy patroness. Since Phoebe was traveling to Rome (cf. v. 1) and had helped many (cf. v. 2), this may be historically true of her.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:3-16

³Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; ⁵also greet the

church that is in their house. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia. ⁶Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. ⁷Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. ⁸Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. ¹⁰Greet Apelles, the approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the *household* of Aristobulus. ¹¹Greet Herodion, my kinsman. Greet those of the *household* of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. ¹²Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who has worked hard in the Lord. ¹³Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine. ¹⁴Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them. ¹⁵Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. ¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

16:3 “Prisca and Aquila” Luke calls her “Priscilla.” She is often named before her husband, which was culturally very unusual (cf. Acts 18:18, 26; I Cor. 16:19; II Tim. 4:19). Possibly she was of Roman nobility or the dominant personality of this couple. Both Paul and this couple were tent-makers or leather workers. Paul calls them “fellow workers in Christ Jesus.” He possibly heard of the strengths and weaknesses of the Roman church from this couple.

16:4 “risked their own necks” This is an idiom from the term for an “executioner’s axe.” The Bible is silent on what Paul meant by this phrase.

▣ **“to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles”** Paul was very grateful for the friendship and active help of this couple. He even expands their service to “all the churches of the Gentiles.” What a sweeping affirmation and thanksgiving! It might refer to their encouraging and informing ministry to Apollos (cf. Acts 18:24-28).

16:5 “the church” This refers to a people, not a building. The term meant “the called out ones.” In the Greek OT, the Septuagint (LXX), this term was used to translate the Hebrew term *qahal*, translated “congregation.” The early Church saw themselves as the natural successors and fulfillment of the OT “congregation of Israel,” and not a sectarian splinter group. See Special Topic at 16:1.

▣ **“that is in their house”** The early Christians met in homes (cf. 16:23; Acts 12:12; I Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15 and Philemon 2). Church buildings did not appear until the third century A.D.

▣ **“Epaenetus”** This man’s name means “praised.”

▣ **“who is the first convert”** This is also said of the household of Stephanas in I Cor. 16:15.

▣ **“from Asia”** This referred to the Roman province which made up the western one-third of modern Turkey.

16:6 “Mary, who has worked hard for you” Nothing is known about this person. She may have been a missionary from the Roman church. So many wonderful, godly believers are unknown to us but well known to God.

16:7 “my fellow prisoners” Modern scholars are not certain to what imprisonment this referred. Paul suffered much for his faith (cf. II Cor. 4:8-11; 6:4-10; 11:25-28). He was in prison at Philippi, Caesarea, Rome, and probably other places as well (cf. Ephesus, I Cor. 15:32; II Cor. 1:8).

▣ **“Junias”** This name could be MASCULINE or FEMININE, which must be determined by accent marks. There are Greek manuscript variations, “*Iounian*,” is found in MSS \aleph , A, B, C, D, F, G & P, but with no accent mark. The accented FEMININE form is found in MSS B², D², and 0150. The early papyrus manuscript P⁴⁶ and some Vulgate and Coptic translations, as well as the Greek texts used by Jerome, have “*Ioulian*” which is FEMININE. Some scholars think that this was a scribal error. This FEMININE form does occur in 16:15. It is possible that the two persons named in v. 7 were

1. two Jewish believers who were imprisoned with Paul
2. a brother and sister
3. a husband and wife

If it is FEMININE and if the phrase “the apostles” referred to a wider use of that term than “the Twelve,” then this was a lady apostle.

It is also interesting that the spelling “Junias” has not been found anywhere in Roman literature or inscriptions, but the name “Junia” was very common. It was a Roman family name. For more information on women in ministry see *Women Leaders and the Church*, by Linda L. Belleville, pp. 188 footnote 42.



NASB “who are outstanding among the apostles”
NKJV “who are of note among the apostles”
NRSV “they are prominent among the apostles”
TEV “they are well known among the apostles”
NJB “to those outstanding apostles”

This can refer to the Twelve, if so these two were well known to them, or to a wider group of ministers known as “apostles” (cf. Acts 14:4, 14; 18:5; I Cor. 4:9; Gal. 1:19; Phil. 2:25; I Thess. 2:6). The context implies this wider usage, as in Eph. 4:11, but the DEFINITE ARTICLE implies the Twelve. See Special Topic: Send (*Apostellō*) at 1:1.

▣ **“who also were in Christ before me”** This obviously means they were saved and active in Christ’s service before Paul’s Damascus road experience.

16:8-16 The names in this section are unknown to scholarship. They are beloved of God and Paul, but their names and service are not recorded in the NT or early Christian literature. What is remarkable is that there is a mixture of (1) common slave names; (2) noble Roman; and (3) Jewish family names. There are men and women. There are wealthy freedman and itinerant preachers. There are foreigners from Persia. All barriers are down in the church of Jesus Christ (cf. 3:22; 10:12; Joel 2:28-32 [Acts 2:14-21]; I Cor. 12:11; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11)!

16:8 “Ampliatius” This name, like Prisca and Junia, was a well known Roman family name.

▣ **“my beloved in the Lord”** The term “beloved” is used by God the Father for Jesus the Son in Matt. 3:17 and 17:5, which may be a title from the Servant Songs of Isaiah (cf. Matt. 12:18, quoting Isa. 42:1). However, Paul uses it to address believers (cf. 1:7; 16:8,9; I Cor. 4:14,17; 15:58; Eph. 6:21; Phil. 2:12; Col. 4:7,9,14; I Tim. 6:2; Philemon v. 16).

16:9 “Urbanus” The name means “city dweller” or “city bred.”

▣ **“in Christ”** This is a repeated phrase, along with “in the Lord,” throughout this chapter. These Christian workers were all part of one family, one Savior.

▣ **“Stachys”** This is a rare name which means “ear” (of grain). Archaeology has found this name associated with Caesar’s family.

16:10 “the approved in Christ” This idiomatic phrase refers to one who had gone through trials and remained faithful. See Special Topic at 2:18.

▣ **“those of the household”** Some scholars speculate that this phrase refers to slaves in the domestic service of Aristobulus and not family members, and the same is true of the phrase in v. 11, “those of the household of Narcissus.”

▣ **“of Aristobulus”** Some scholars (Lightfoot) speculate that this was the brother of Herod Agrippa I (who in Acts 12 had the Apostle James killed). If so, it shows how the gospel had begun to permeate this royal Idumean family.

16:11 “Herodian” This may have been a slave of the family of Herod.

▣ **“those of the household of Narcissus”** This may have referred to the well known servant of Emperor Claudius. If so, it shows how the gospel had begun to permeate the Roman royalty.

16:12 “Tryphaena” This name means “dainty.”

▣ **“Tryphosa”** This name means “delicate.” They were possibly sisters, even twins.

▣ **“worked hard”** The term has the connotation of labor “to the point of exhaustion.”

▣ **“Persis”** This means “Persian woman.”

16:13 “Rufus” This name means “red” or “red-headed.” There is an apparently well known Rufus in Rome (cf. Mark 15:21). Whether he can be identified with this person is uncertain but surely possible.

▣

NASB “a choice man in the Lord”

NKJV, NRSV “chosen in the Lord”

TEV “that outstanding worker in the Lord’s service”

NJB “a chosen servant of the Lord”

This is literally “the elect one.” Here the term relates not only to God’s call, but also to his lifestyle service. His mother also treated Paul with great affection.

16:14 “Hermes” This is the name of the god of good luck. It was a very common slave name of the first century Greco-Roman world.

16:15 “all the saints” See Special Topic: Saints at 1:7.

16:16 “holy kiss” There is no early evidence of who kissed who, or when, or where. In the synagogue, whose form of greeting was continued in the church, the men kissed men on the cheek and the women kissed the women (cf. I Cor. 16:20; II Cor. 13:12; I Thess. 5:26; I Pet. 5:14). This act of greeting became a problem within the church because it was misunderstood by unbelievers and, therefore, was stopped in some churches, although Justin Martyr mentions it in the second century.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:17-20

¹⁷Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. ¹⁸For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. ¹⁹For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil. ²⁰The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

16:17 This warning seems to break into the context unexpectedly. However, Paul may have included it as a contrast to godly itinerant ministers. There is a list in vv. 17-18 of what these false teachers were doing.

1. they stirred up divisions
2. they put hindrances in the believer's way
3. they taught in opposition to the instruction the church had given
4. they were serving their own base appetites
5. they were deceiving the hearts of unsuspecting people by their smooth, flattering talk

This list is not related to the weak and strong believers of 14:1-15:13.

▣ **“turn away from them”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This is a recurrent theme (cf. Gal. 1:8-9; II Thess. 3:6,14; II John 10).

16:18

NASB, NRSV

TEV “their own appetites”

NKJV “their own belly”

NJB “their own greed”

This is literally “bellies” (cf. Phil. 3:19; Titus 1:12). The false teachers turned everything to their own base interests.

▣ **“by their smooth and flattering speech”** False teachers are often physically attractive and have dynamic personalities (cf. Col. 2:4). They are often very logical in their presentations. Beware! Some possible biblical tests to identify false teachers are found in Deut. 13:1-5; 18:22; Matt. 7; Phil. 3:2-3, 18-19; I John 4:1-3.

▣ **“the deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting”** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE denoting ongoing deception. These apparently new or naive believers were vulnerable (“inexperienced in evil”).

16:19 “the report of your obedience has reached to all” This is referred to in 1:8. This is one of Paul's hyperboles.

▣ **“be wise. . .in what is good, and innocent in what is evil”** This reflects the teaching of Jesus (cf. Matt. 10:16; Luke 10:3).

16:20 “the God of peace” This is a wonderful title for God (cf. 15:33; II Cor. 13:16; Phil. 4:9; I Thess. 5:23 and Heb. 13:20).

▣ **“will soon crush Satan under your feet”** This is an allusion to Gen. 3:15. The believer's relationship with the Messiah gives them victory also (cf. I John 5:18-20). This is an awesome promise and responsibility. In this context Satan epitomizes the confusion and division caused by false teachers which causes the church

to lose its great commission focus. Behind false teachers is the demonic! The gospel, however, dispels darkness and evil for those who embrace it and live it. For a good book on this subject see *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare*, by Clinton E. Arnold.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons.

1. The OT does not reveal an arch enemy to good, but a servant of YHWH who offers mankind an alternative and accuses mankind of unrighteousness (A. B. Davidson, pp. 300-306).
2. The concept of a personal arch enemy of God developed in the inter-biblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian religion (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism.
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately) then very different views of evil are revealed.

If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folk lore or English literature (i.e., Dante, Milton) to further clarify the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term Satan (BDB 966) or accuser seems to relate to three separate groups.

1. human accusers (I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 11:14,23,25; Ps. 109:6)
2. angelic accusers (Num. 22:22-23; Zech. 3:1)
3. demonic accusers (I Chr. 21:1; I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2)

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Genesis 3 identified with Satan (cf. Book of Wisdom 2:23-24; II Enoch 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. *Sot* 9b and *Sanh.* 29a). The “sons of God” of Genesis 6 become the evil angels in I Enoch 54:6. They become the origin of evil in rabbinical theology. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (i.e., Satan) in II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9.

The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel’s strong monotheism (cf. I Kgs. 22:20-22; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information are (1) Job 1-2, where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e., angels) or (2) Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28, where prideful near eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors not only of the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezekiel 31). However, Isaiah 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp. 770-776]) says that Rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue. I think that the rabbinical concept of angelic mediation and opposition in the giving of the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai opened the door to the concept of an arch-angelic enemy of YHWH as well as mankind. There are two high gods of Persian (Zoroastrian) dualism, *Ahkiman* and *Ormaza*, good and evil. This dualism developed into a Judaic limited dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the development of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis proclaim. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and mankind is still responsible for his/her choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

▣ **“the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you”** This is a common closing for Paul (cf. I Cor. 16:23; II Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; Col. 4:18; I Thess. 5:28; II Thess. 3:18 and also in Rev. 22:21). It was possibly written in his own hand. It was his way of verifying his letters (cf. II Thess. 3:17; I Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:21

²¹Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and *so do* Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

16:21-23 These verses are a post script. Paul’s co-workers at Corinth sent their greetings.

16:21 “Lucius” This could have been

1. Luke the physician (cf. Col. 4:14), or possibly an idiom for “highly educated one”
2. Lucius of Cyrene (cf. Acts 13:1)
3. an unknown Christian

▣ **“Jason”** This is possibly the Jason in whose house Paul stayed at Thessalonica (cf. Acts 17:5-9).

▣ **“Sosipater”** This man is possibly the Sopater of Berea in Acts 20:4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:22

²²I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.

16:22 “I, Tertius, who write this letter” Paul used a scribe (*amanuensis*) to write his letters (cf. I Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; II Thess. 3:17). I think Paul had poor eye sight and could not write the small, tight script needed to preserve space on a sheet of papyrus or leather scroll (cf. Gal. 6:18)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:23-24

²³Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother. ²⁴[The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.]

16:23 “Gaius” This could have been

1. Gaius Titius Justus of Acts 18:7
2. Gaius of Derbe (cf. Acts 19:29; 20:4; I Cor. 1:14)
3. the Gaius of III John v. 1

▣ **“host to me and the whole church”** This was the hospitality needed in the church. Some believers with resources allowed the traveling Christian ministers to room and board. Some, as this man, also opened his home to be the meeting place for gathered events. House churches were the norm for over a hundred years. See Special Topic: Church (*Ekklesia*) at 16:1.

▣ **“Erastus, the city treasurer”** He is also mentioned in Acts 19:22; II Tim. 4:20. He had an itinerant ministry connected to Paul.

▣ **“Quartus”** This name in Latin means “fourth.” He was possibly the brother of Tertius, which in Latin means “third” (cf. v. 22).

16:24 This verse is not present in the early Greek manuscripts, P^{46,61}, \aleph , A, B, C, and 0150. It is found in some Greek manuscripts after 16:23 and others after 16:27. It is obviously not original with Paul. It is omitted in the NASB, NRSV, TEV and NJB translations. The UBS⁴ rates its omission as “certain” (A). It is an attempted close to the letter and is related to the problem of the closing doxology being at the end of chapter 14, 15, and 16 in various ancient Greek texts.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:25-27

²⁵Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, *leading to obedience of faith*; ²⁷to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

16:25-27 This is one sentence in Greek. This benediction can be found in ancient Greek manuscripts, both at the end of chapter 14 and chapter 15. This context is a recapitulation of the major themes of the book possibly written in Paul’s own hand.

Some believe that this doxology may have been

1. the cover letter for the cyclical letter of Ephesians
2. for those on the way to Rome because
 - a. Paul had never visited Rome, yet he says hello to twenty-six people
 - b. chapter 16 is the first mention of false teachers
 - c. this doxology appears in the Greek manuscripts at several different places.

It is also possible that Paul made two copies, chapters 1-14 to Rome, chapters 1-16 to Ephesus. Usually these assertions are answered by

1. the fact that many of these early Christian workers traveled
2. the fact that no Greek manuscript of Romans is without chapter 16
3. the possibility that false teachers are implied in 14:1-15:13

16:25 “to Him who is able” This is another wonderful title for God used three times in the NT (cf. Eph. 3:20; Jude 24).

Notice how God establishes believers.

1. Paul’s gospel presentation

2. the preaching about Jesus Christ
3. the revealing of God's eternal plan of salvation which had been kept secret (mystery)

Believers are enabled by the knowledge of the gospel. This gospel has now been made available to all!

▣ **“the mystery”** God has a unified purpose for mankind's redemption that even preceded the fall (cf. Gen. 3). Hints of this plan are revealed in the OT (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; and the universal passages in the Prophets). However this full agenda was not clear (cf. I Cor. 2:6-8). With the coming of Jesus and the Spirit it begins to become more obvious. Paul used the term “mystery” to describe this total redemptive plan (cf. I Cor. 4:1; Eph. 2:11-3:13; 6:19; Col. 4:3; I Tim. 1:9). However, he uses it in several different senses.

1. A partial hardening of Israel to allow Gentiles to be included. This influx of Gentiles will work as a mechanism for Jews to accept Jesus as the Christ of prophecy (cf. Rom. 11:25-32).
2. The gospel was made known to the nations, which are all included in Christ and through Christ (cf. Rom. 16:25-27; Col. 2:2).
3. Believers' new bodies at the Second Coming (cf. I Cor. 15:5-57; I Thess. 4:13-18).
4. The summing up of all things in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:8-11).
5. The Gentiles and Jews are fellow-heirs (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).
6. Intimacy of the relationship between Christ and the Church described in marriage terms (cf. Eph. 5:22-33).
7. Gentiles included in the covenant people and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ so as to produce Christlike maturity, that is, restore the marred image of God in fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 6:5, 11-13; 8:21) of God in man (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6; Col. 1:26-28).
8. The end-time Anti-Christ (cf. II Thess. 2:1-11).
9. An early church summary of the mystery is found in I Tim. 1:16.

16:26 “now is manifested” This mystery or plan of God has now been clearly revealed to all mankind. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

▣ **“and by the Scriptures”** God has manifested this mystery in the person and work of Jesus. This was foretold by the OT prophets. The establishment of a NT church made up of believing Jews and Gentiles was always God's plan (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34).

▣ **“eternal God”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ETERNAL

Robert B. Girdlestone, in his book *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, has an interesting comment on the word “eternal”:

“The adjective *aiōnios* is used more than forty times in the N.T. with respect to *eternal life*, which is regarded partly as a present gift, partly as a promise for the future. It is also applied to God's endless existence in Rom. 16.26; to the endless efficacy of Christ's atonement in Heb. 9.12, 13.20; and to past ages in Rom. 16.25, 2 Tim. 1.9, Titus 1.2.

This word is used with reference to *eternal fire*, Matt. 18.8,25. 41, Jude 7; *eternal punishment*, Matt. 25.46; *eternal judgment* or *condemnation*, Mark 3.29, Heb. 6.2; *eternal destruction*, 2 Thess. 1.9. The word in these passages implies *finality*, and apparently signifies that when these judgments shall be inflicted, the time of probation, change, or the chance of retrieving one's fortune, will have gone by absolutely and for ever. We understand very little about the future, about the relation of human life to the rest of existence, and about the moral weight of unbelief, as viewed in the light

of eternity. If, on the one hand, it is wrong to add to God's word, on the other we must not take away from it; and if we stagger under the doctrine of eternal punishment as it is set forth in Scripture, we must be content to wait, cleaving to the Gospel of God's love in Christ, while acknowledging that there is a dark background which we are unable to comprehend" (pp. 318-319).

▣ **“has been made known to all the nations”** This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. It was placed last in the Greek sentence for emphasis. God has presented the gospel offer to the whole world, which was always His purpose (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

▣
NASB **“leading to obedience of faith”**
NKJV **“for obedience to the faith”**
NRSV **“to bring about the obedience of faith”**
TEV **“leading to obedience of faith”**
NJB **“to bring them to the obedience of faith”**

There are different ways to understand this phrase; it may refer to

1. doctrine about Christ
2. trust in Christ
3. obedience to the gospel both initially and continually

Obedience (cf. 1:5) must be combined theologically with the concept of repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

16:27 “the only wise God” This is an allusion to monotheism (see Special Topic at 3:30, cf. Deut. 6:4-5). Christianity has only one God, just like Judaism, however, the full deity of Jesus and the full personality of the Spirit force us to a “tri-unity,” Trinity (see Special Topic at 8:11).

▣ **“be the glory forever”** See note at 3:23.

▣ **“Amen”** See Special Topic at 1:25.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How did Paul know all of these people in the Roman church when he had never been there?
2. Is there any biblical evidence for women deacons (cf. 16:1; I Tim. 3:11; 5:3-16)?
3. What is the implication of so many women being listed in this chapter?
4. Describe the methods and message of the false teachers (vv. 17-18).

APPENDIX ONE

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Koine Greek, often called Hellenistic Greek, was the common language of the Mediterranean world beginning with Alexander the Great's (336-323 B.C.) conquest and lasting about eight hundred years (300 B.C.-A.D. 500). It was not just a simplified, classical Greek, but in many ways a newer form of Greek that became the second language of the ancient near east and Mediterranean world.

The Greek of the New Testament was unique in some ways because its users, except Luke and the author of Hebrews, probably used Aramaic as their primary language. Therefore, their writing was influenced by the idioms and structural forms of Aramaic. Also, they read and quoted the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) which was also written in Koine Greek. But the Septuagint was also written by Jewish scholars whose mother tongue was not Greek.

This serves as a reminder that we cannot push the New Testament into a tight grammatical structure. It is unique and yet has much in common with (1) the Septuagint; (2) Jewish writings such as those of Josephus; and (3) the papyri found in Egypt. How then do we approach a grammatical analysis of the New Testament?

The grammatical features of Koine Greek and New Testament Koine Greek are fluid. In many ways it was a time of simplification of grammar. Context will be our major guide. Words only have meaning in a larger context, therefore, grammatical structure can only be understood in light of (1) a particular author's style; and (2) a particular context. No conclusive definitions of Greek forms and structures are possible.

Koine Greek was primarily a verbal language. Often the key to interpretation is the type and form of the verbals. In most main clauses the verb will occur first, showing its preeminence. In analyzing the Greek verb three pieces of information must be noted: (1) the basic emphasis of the tense, voice and mood (accidence or morphology); (2) the basic meaning of the particular verb (lexicography); and (3) the flow of the context (syntax).

I. TENSE

- A. TENSE or aspect involves the relationship of the VERBS to completed action or incomplete action. This is often called "perfective" and "imperfective."
 - 1. Perfective tenses focus on the occurrence of an action. No further information is given except that something happened! Its start, continuation or culmination is not addressed.
 - 2. Imperfective tenses focus on the continuing process of an action. It can be described in terms of linear action, durative action, progressive action, etc.

- B. TENSES can be categorized by how the author sees the action as progressing
 - 1. It occurred = AORIST
 - 2. It occurred and the results abide = PERFECT
 - 3. It was occurring in the past and the results were abiding, but not now = PLUPERFECT
 - 4. It is occurring = PRESENT
 - 5. It was occurring = IMPERFECT
 - 6. It will occur = FUTURE

A concrete example of how these tenses help in interpretation would be the term “save.” It was used in several different TENSES to show both its process and culmination.

1. AORIST – “saved” (cf. Rom. 8:24)
2. PERFECT – “have been saved and the result continues” (cf. Eph. 2:5,8)
3. PRESENT – “being saved” (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2)
4. FUTURE – “shall be saved” (cf. Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9)

C. In focusing on VERB TENSES, interpreters look for the reason the original author chose to express himself in a certain TENSE. The standard “no frills” TENSE was the AORIST. It was the regular “unspecific,” “unmarked,” or “unflagged” VERB form. It can be used in a wide variety of ways which the context must specify. It simply was stating that something occurred. The past time aspect is only intended in the INDICATIVE MOOD. If any other TENSE was used, something more specific was being emphasized. But what?

1. PERFECT TENSE. This speaks of a completed action with abiding results. In some ways it was a combination of the AORIST and PRESENT TENSES. Usually the focus is on the abiding results or the completion of an act. Example: Eph. 2:5 & 8, “you have been and continue to be saved.”
2. PLUPERFECT TENSE. This was like the PERFECT except the abiding results have ceased. Example: “Peter was standing at the door outside” (John 18:16).
3. PRESENT TENSE. This speaks of an incomplete or imperfect action. The focus is usually on the continuation of the event. Example: “Everyone abiding in Him does not continue sinning,” “everyone having been begotten of God does not continue to commit sin” (I John 3:6 & 9).
4. IMPERFECT TENSE. In this tense the relationship to the PRESENT TENSE is analogous to the relationship between the PERFECT and the PLUPERFECT. The IMPERFECT speaks of incomplete action that was occurring but has now ceased or the beginning of an action in the past. Example: “Then all Jerusalem were continuing to go out to him” or “then all Jerusalem began to go out to him” (Matt. 3:5).
5. FUTURE TENSE. This speaks of an action that was usually projected into a future time frame. It focused on the potential for an occurrence rather than an actual occurrence. It often speaks of the certainty of the event. Example: “Blessed are . . . they will. . .” (Matt. 5:4-9).

II. VOICE

- A. Voice describes the relationship between the action of the VERB and its SUBJECT.
- B. ACTIVE VOICE was the normal, expected, unemphasized way to assert that the subject was performing the action of the VERB.
- C. The PASSIVE VOICE means that the SUBJECT was receiving the action of the VERB produced by an outside agent. The outside agent producing the action was indicated in the Greek NT by the following PREPOSITIONS and cases:
 1. a personal direct agent by *hupo* with the ABLATIVE CASE (cf. Matt. 1:22; Acts 22:30).
 2. a personal intermediate agent by *dia* with the ABLATIVE CASE (cf. Matt. 1:22).
 3. an impersonal agent usually by *en* with the INSTRUMENTAL CASE.
 4. sometimes either a personal or impersonal agent by the INSTRUMENTAL CASE alone.
- D. The MIDDLE VOICE means that the SUBJECT produces the action of the VERB and is also directly involved in the action of the VERB. It is often called the voice of heightened personal interest. This construction emphasized the SUBJECT of the clause or sentence in some way. This construction is

not found in English. It has a wide possibility of meanings and translations in Greek. Some examples of the form are:

1. REFLEXIVE – the direct action of the subject on itself. Example: “Hanged himself” (Matt. 27:5).
2. INTENSIVE – the subject produces the action for itself. Example: “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light” (II Cor. 11:14).
3. Reciprocal – the interplay of two subjects. Example: “They counseled with one another” (Matt. 26:4).

III. MOOD (or “MODE”)

- A. There are four MOODS in Koine Greek. They indicate the relation of the VERB to reality, at least within the author’s own mind. The MOODS are divided into two broad categories: that which indicated reality (INDICATIVE) and that which indicated potentiality (SUBJUNCTIVE, IMPERATIVE and OPTATIVE).
- B. The INDICATIVE MOOD was the normal MOOD for expressing action that had occurred or was occurring, at least in the author’s mind. It was the only Greek mood that expressed a definite time, and even here this aspect was secondary.
- C. The SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD expressed probable future action. Something had not yet happened but the chances were likely that it would. It had much in common with the FUTURE INDICATIVE. The difference was that the SUBJUNCTIVE expresses some degree of doubt. In English this is often expressed by the terms “could,” “would,” “may,” or “might.”
- D. The OPTATIVE MOOD expressed a wish which was theoretically possible. It was considered one step further from reality than the SUBJUNCTIVE. The OPTATIVE expressed possibility under certain conditions. The OPTATIVE was rare in the New Testament. Its most frequent usage is Paul’s famous phrase, “May it never be” (KJV, “God forbid”), used fifteen times (cf. Rom. 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). Other examples are found in Thess. 1:38, 20:16, Acts 8:20, and I Thess. 3:11.
- E. The IMPERATIVE MOOD emphasized a command which was possible, but the emphasis was on the intent of the speaker. It asserted only volitional possibility and was conditioned on the choices of another. There was a special use of the IMPERATIVE in prayers and 3rd person requests. These commands were found only in the PRESENT and AORIST tenses in the NT.
- F. Some grammars categorize PARTICIPLES as another type of MOOD. They are very common in the Greek NT, usually defined as a VERBAL ADJECTIVE. They are translated in conjunction with the main VERB to which they relate. A wide variety was possible in translating participles. It is best to consult several English translations. *The Bible in Twenty Six Translations* published by Baker is a great help here.
- G. The AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was the normal or “unmarked” way to record an occurrence. Any other tense, voice or had some specific interpretive significance that the original author wanted to communicate.

IV. For the person not familiar with Greek the following study aids will provide the needed information:

- A. Friberg, Barbara and Timothy. *Analytical Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- B. Marshall, Alfred. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- C. Mounce, William D. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- D. Summers, Ray. *Essentials of New Testament Greek*. Nashville: Broadman, 1950.
- E. Academically accredited Koine Greek correspondence courses are available through Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL.

V. NOUNS

- A. Syntactically, NOUNS are classified by case. Case was that inflected form of a NOUN that showed its relationship to the VERB and other parts of the sentence. In Koine Greek many of the case functions were indicated by PREPOSITIONS. Since the case form was able to identify several different relationships, the PREPOSITIONS developed to give clearer separation to these possible functions.
- B. Greek cases are categorized in the following eight ways:
 - 1. The NOMINATIVE CASE was used for naming and it usually was the subject of the sentence or clause. It was also used for PREDICATE NOUNS and ADJECTIVES with the linking VERBS “to be” or “become.”
 - 2. The GENITIVE CASE was used for description and usually assigned an attribute or quality to the word to which it was related. It answered the question, “What kind?” It was often expressed by the use of the English PREPOSITION “of.”
 - 3. The ABLATIVE CASE used the same inflected form as the GENITIVE, but it was used to describe separation. It usually denoted separation from a point in time, space, source, origin or degree. It was often expressed by the use of the English PREPOSITION “from.”
 - 4. The DATIVE CASE was used to describe personal interest. This could denote a positive or negative aspect. Often this was the indirect object. It was often expressed by the English PREPOSITION “to.”
 - 5. The LOCATIVE CASE was the same inflected form as the DATIVE, but it described position or location in space, time, or logical limits. It was often expressed by the English PREPOSITION “in, on, at, among, during, by, upon, and beside.”
 - 6. The INSTRUMENTAL CASE was the same inflected form as the DATIVE and LOCATIVE cases. It expressed means or association. It was often expressed by the English PREPOSITION, “by” or “with.”
 - 7. The ACCUSATIVE CASE was used to describe the conclusion of an action. It expressed limitation. Its main use was the direct object. It answered the question, “How far?” or “To what extent?”
 - 8. The VOCATIVE CASE was used for direct address.

VI. CONJUNCTIONS AND CONNECTORS

- A. Greek is a very precise language because it has so many connectives. They connect thoughts (clauses, sentences, and paragraphs). They are so common that their absence (asyndeton) is often exegetically significant. As a matter of fact, these conjunctions and connectors show the direction of the author's thought. They often are crucial in determining what exactly he is trying to communicate.
- B. Here is a list of some of the conjunctions and connectors and their meanings (this information has been gleaned mostly from H. E. Dana and Julius K. Mantey's *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*).
1. Time connectors
 - (a) *epei, epeid ē, hopote, hōs, hote, hotan* (SUBJ.) – “when”
 - (b) *heōs* – “while”
 - (c) *hotan, epan* (SUBJ.) – “whenever”
 - (d) *heōs, achri, mechri* (subj.) – “until”
 - a. *priv* (infin.) – “before”
 - b. *hōs* – “since,” “when,” “as”
 2. Logical connectors
 - a. Purpose
 1. *hina* (SUBJ.), *hopōs* (SUBJ.), *hōs* – “in order that,” “that”
 - (2) *hōste* (ARTICULAR ACCUSATIVE INFINITIVE) – “that”
 - (3) *pros* (ARTICULAR ACCUSATIVE INFINITIVE) or *eis* (ARTICULAR ACCUSATIVE INFINITIVE) – “that”
 - b. Result (there is a close association between the grammatical forms of purpose and result)
 - (1) *hōste* (INFINITIVE, this is the most common) – “in order that,” “thus”
 - (2) *hiva* (SUBJ.) – “so that”
 - (3) *ara* – “so”
 - c. Causal or reason
 - (1) *gar* (cause/effect or reason/conclusion) – “for,” “because”
 - (2) *dioti, hotiy* – “because”
 - (3) *epei, epeidē, hōs* – “since”
 - (4) *dia* (with ACCUSATIVE) and (with ARTICULAR INFIN.) – “because”
 - d. Inferential
 - (1) *ara, poinun, hōste* – “therefore”
 - (2) *dio* (strongest INFERENTIAL CONJUNCTION) – “on which account,” “wherefore,” “therefore”
 - (3) *oun* – “therefore,” “so,” “then,” “consequently”
 - (4) *toinoun* – “accordingly”
 - e. Adversative or contrast
 - (1) *alla* (strong ADVERSATIVE) – “but,” “except”
 - (2) *de* – “but,” “however,” “yet,” “on the other hand”
 - (3) *kai* – “but”
 - (4) *mentoi, oun* – “however”
 - (5) *plēn* – “never-the-less” (mostly in Luke)
 - (6) *oun* – “however”
 - f. Comparison
 - (1) *hōs, kathōs* (introduce comparative clauses)
 - (2) *kata* (in compounds, *katho, kathoti, kathōsper, kathaper*)

- (3) *hosos* (in Hebrews)
- (4) *ē* – “than”
- g. Continuative or series
 - (1) *de* – “and,” “now”
 - (2) *kai* – “and”
 - (3) *tei* – “and”
 - (4) *hina, oun* – “that”
 - (5) *oun* – “then” (in John)
- 3. Emphatic usages
 - a. *alla* – “certainty,” “yea,” “in fact”
 - b. *ara* – “indeed,” “certainly,” “really”
 - c. *gar* – “but really,” “certainly,” “indeed”
 - d. *de* – “indeed”
 - e. *ean* – “even”
 - f. *kai* – “even,” “indeed,” “really”
 - g. *mentoi* – “indeed”
 - h. *oun* – “really,” “by all means”

VII. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

- A. A CONDITIONAL SENTENCE is one that contains one or more conditional clauses. This grammatical structure aids interpretation because it provides the conditions, reasons or causes why the action of the main VERB does or does not occur. There were four types of conditional sentences. They move from that which was assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his purpose to that which was only a wish.
- B. The FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE expressed action or being which was assumed to be true from the writer’s perspective or for his purposes even though it was expressed with an “if.” In several contexts it could be translated “since” (cf. Matt. 4:3; Rom. 8:31). However, this does not mean to imply that all FIRST CLASSES are true to reality. Often they were used to make a point in an argument or to highlight a fallacy (cf. Matt. 12:27).
- C. The SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE is often called “contrary to fact.” It states something that was untrue to reality to make a point. Examples:
 - 1. “If He were really a prophet, which He is not, He would know who and of what character the woman is who is clinging to Him, but He does not” (Thess. 7:39).
 - 2. “If you really believed Moses, which you do not, you would believe me, which you do not” (John 5:46).
 - 3. “If I were still trying to be pleasing to men, which I am not, I would not be a slave of Christ at all, which I am” (Gal. 1:10).
- D. The THIRD CLASS speaks of possible future action. It often assumes the probability of that action. It usually implies a contingency. The action of the main VERB is contingent on the action in the “it” clause. Examples from I John: 1:6-10; 2:4,6,9,15,20,21,24,29; 3:21; 4:20; 5:14,16.
- E. The FOURTH CLASS is the farthest removed from possibility. It is rare in the NT. As a matter of fact, there is no complete FOURTH CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE in which both parts of the condition fit the definition. An example of a partial FOURTH CLASS is the opening clause in I Pet. 3:14. An example of a partial FOURTH CLASS in the concluding clause is Acts 8:31.

VIII. PROHIBITIONS

- A. The PRESENT IMPERATIVE with MĒ PARTICLE often (but not exclusively) has the emphasis of stopping an act already in process. Some examples: “stop storing up your riches on earth. . .” (Matt. 6:19); “stop worrying about your life. . .” (Matt. 6:25); “stop offering to sin the parts of your bodies as instruments of wrongdoing. . .” (Rom. 6:13); “you must stop offending the Holy Spirit of God. . .” (Eph. 4:30); and “stop getting drunk on wine. . .” (5:18).
- B. The AORIST SUBJUNCTIVE with MĒ PARTICLE has the emphasis of “do not even begin or start an act.” Some examples: “Do not even begin to suppose that. . .” (Matt. 5:17); “never start to worry. . .” (Matt. 6:31); “you must never be ashamed. . .” (II Tim. 1:8).
- C. The DOUBLE NEGATIVE with the SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD is a very emphatic negation. “Never, no never” or “not under any circumstance.” Some examples: “he will never, no never experience death” (John 8:51); “I will never, no, never. . .” (I Cor. 8:13).

IX. THE ARTICLE

- A. In Koine Greek the DEFINITE ARTICLE “the” had a use similar to English. Its basic function was that of “a pointer,” a way to draw attention to a word, name or phrase. The use varies from author to author in the New Testament. The DEFINITE ARTICLE could also function
 - 1. as a contrasting device like a demonstrative PRONOUN;
 - 2. as a sign to refer to a previously introduced SUBJECT or person;
 - 3. as a way to identify the subject in a sentence with a linking VERB. Examples: “God is Spirit,” John 4:24; “God is light,” I John 1:5; “God is love,” 4:8,16.
- B. Koine Greek did not have an INDEFINITE ARTICLE like the English “a” or “an.” The absence of the DEFINITE ARTICLE could mean
 - 1. a focus on the characteristics or quality of something
 - 2. a focus on the category of something
- C. The NT authors varied widely as to how the ARTICLE was employed.

X. WAYS OF SHOWING EMPHASIS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The techniques for showing emphasis vary from author to author in the New Testament. The most consistent and formal writers were Luke and the author of Hebrews.
- B. We have stated earlier that the AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was standard and unmarked for emphasis, but any other tense, voice or mood had interpretive significance. This is not to imply that the AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was not often used in a significant grammatical sense. Example: Rom. 6:10 (twice).
- C. Word order in Koine Greek
 - 1. Koine Greek was an inflected language which was not dependent, like English, on word order. Therefore, the author could vary the normal expected order to show
 - a. what the author wanted to emphasize to the reader

- b. what the author thought would be surprising to the reader
 - c. what the author felt deeply about
2. The normal word order in Greek is still an unsettled issue. However, the supposed normal order is
- a. for linking VERBS
 - (1) VERB
 - (2) SUBJECT
 - (3) COMPLEMENT
 - b. for transitive VERBS
 - (1) VERB
 - (2) SUBJECT
 - (3) OBJECT
 - (4) INDIRECT OBJECT
 - (5) PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE
 - c. for NOUN phrases
 - (1) NOUN
 - (2) MODIFIER
 - (3) PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE
3. Word order can be an extremely important exegetical point. Examples:
- a. “right hand they gave to me and Barnabas of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9). The phrase “right hand of fellowship” is split and fronted to show its significance.
 - b. “with Christ” (Gal. 2:20), was placed first. His death was central.
 - c. “It was bit by bit and in many different ways” (Heb. 1:1), was placed first. It was how God revealed Himself that was being contrasted, not the fact of revelation.

D. Usually some degree of emphasis was shown by

- 1. The repetition of the PRONOUN which was already present in the VERB’S inflected form. Example: “I, myself, will surely be with you. . .” (Matt. 28:20).
- 2. The absence of an expected CONJUNCTION, or other connecting device between words, phrases, clauses or sentences. This is called an asyndeton (“not bound”). The connecting device was expected, so its absence would draw attention. Examples:
 - a. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3ff (emphasized the list)
 - b. John 14:1 (new topic)
 - c. Romans 9:1 (new section)
 - d. II Cor. 12:20 (emphasize the list)
- 3. The repetition of words or phrases present in a given context. Examples: “to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:6, 12 & 14). This phrase was used to show the work of each person of the Trinity.
- 4. The use of an idiom or word (sound) play between terms
 - a. euphemisms – substitute words for taboo subjects like “sleep” for death (John 11:11-14) or “feet” for male genitalia (Ruth 3:7-8; I Sam. 24:3).
 - b. circumlocutions – substitute words for God’s name, like “Kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 3:21) or “a voice from heaven” (Matt. 3:17).
 - c. figures of speech
 - (1) impossible exaggerations (Matt. 3:9; 5:29-30; 19:24).
 - (2) mild over statements (Matt. 3:5; Acts 2:36).
 - (3) personifications (I Cor. 15:55).
 - (4) irony (Gal. 5:12)
 - (5) poetic passages (Phil. 2:6-11).

- (6) sound plays between words
 - (a) “church”
 - (i) “church” (Eph. 3:21)
 - (ii) “calling” (Eph. 4:1,4)
 - (iii) “called” (Eph. 4:1,4)
 - (b) “free”
 - (i) “free woman” (Gal. 4:31)
 - (ii) “freedom” (Gal. 5:1)
 - (iii) “free” (Gal. 5:1)
 - d. idiomatic language – language which is usually cultural and language specific:
 - (1) This was the figurative use of “food” (John 4:31-34).
 - (2) This was the figurative use of “Temple” (John 2:19; Matt. 26:61).
 - (3) This was a Hebrew idiom of compassion, “hate” (Gen. 29:31; Deut. 21:15; Thess. 14:36; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13).
 - (4) “All” versus “many.” Compare Isa. 53:6 (“all”) with 53:11 & 12 (“many”). The terms are synonymous as Rom. 5:18 and 19 show.
 - 5. The use of a full linguistic phrase instead of a single word. Example: “The Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - 6. The special use of *autos*
 - a. when with the ARTICLE (attributive position) it was translated “same.”
 - b. when without the ARTICLE (predicate position) it was translated as an INTENSIVE REFLEXIVE PRONOUN—“himself,” “herself,” or “itself.”
- E. The non-Greek reading Bible student can identify emphasis in several ways:
- 1. The use of an analytical lexicon and interlinear Greek/English text.
 - 2. The comparison of English translations, particularly from the differing theories of translations. Example: comparing a “word for word” translation (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV) with a “dynamic equivalent” (Williams, NIV, NEB, REB, JB, NJB, TEV). A good help here would be *The Bible in Twenty-Six Translations* published by Baker.
 - 3. The use of *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph Bryant Rotherham (Kregel, 1994).
 - 4. The use of a very literal translation
 - a. *The American Standard Version* of 1901
 - b. *Young’s Literal Translation of the Bible* by Robert Young (Guardian Press, 1976).

The study of grammar is tedious but necessary for proper interpretation. These brief definitions, comments and examples are meant to encourage and equip non-Greek reading persons to use the grammatical notes provided in this volume. Surely these definitions are oversimplified. They should not be used in a dogmatic, inflexible manner, but as stepping stones toward a greater understanding of New Testament syntax. Hopefully these definitions will also enable readers to understand the comments of other study aids such as technical commentaries on the New Testament.

We must be able to verify our interpretation based on items of information found in the texts of the Bible. Grammar is one of the most helpful of these items; other items would include historical setting, literary context, contemporary word usage, and parallel passages.

APPENDIX TWO

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

This subject will be dealt with in such a way as to explain the textual notes found in this commentary. The following outline will be utilized

- I. The textual sources of our English Bible
 - A. Old Testament
 - B. New Testament
- II. Brief explanation of the problems and theories of “lower criticism” also called “textual criticism.”
- III. Suggested sources for further reading

I. The textual sources of our English Bible

A. Old Testament

1. Masoretic text (MT) – The Hebrew consonantal text was set by Rabbi Aquiba in A.D. 100. The vowel points, accents, marginal notes, punctuation and apparatus points started being added in the sixth century A.D. and were finished in the ninth century A.D. It was done by a family of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes. The textual form they used was the same as the one in the Mishnah, Talmud, Targums, Peshitta, and Vulgate.
2. Septuagint (LXX) – Tradition says the Septuagint was produced by 70 Jewish scholars in 70 days for the Alexandria library under the sponsorship of King Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.) The translation was supposedly requested by a Jewish leader living in Alexandria. This tradition comes from “Letter of Aristeas.” The LXX frequently was based on a differing Hebrew textual tradition from the text of Rabbi Aquiba (MT).
3. Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) – The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in the Roman B.C. period (200 B.C. to A.D. 70) by a sect of Jewish separatists called the “Essenes.” The Hebrew manuscripts, found in several sites around the Dead Sea, show a somewhat different Hebrew textual family behind both the MT and the LXX.
4. Some specific examples of how the comparison of these texts have helped interpreters understand the Old Testament
 - a. The LXX has helped translators and scholars understand the MT
 - (1) the LXX of Isa. 52:14, “As many shall be amazed at him.”
 - (2) the MT of Isa. 52:14, “Just as many were astonished over you.”
 - (3) in Isa. 52:15 the pronoun distinction of the LXX is confirmed
 - (a) LXX, “so will many nations marvel at him”
 - (b) MT, “so he sprinkles many nations”
 - b. The DSS have helped translators and scholars understand the MT
 - (1) the DSS of Isa. 21:8, “then the seer cried, Upon a watchtower I stand. . .”
 - (2) the MT of Isa. 21:8, “and I cried a lion! My Lord, I always stand on the watch tower by day. . .”
 - c. Both the LXX and DSS have helped clarify Isa. 53:11
 - (1) LXX & DSS, “after the travail of his soul he will see light, he will be satisfied”
 - (2) MT, “he shall see. . .of the travail of his soul, He shall be satisfied”

B. New Testament

1. Over 5,300 manuscripts of all or parts of the Greek New Testament are extant. About 85 are written on papyri and 268 are manuscripts written in all capital letters (uncials). Later, about the ninth century A.D., a running script (minuscule) was developed. The Greek manuscripts in written form number about 2,700. We also have about 2,100 copies of lists of Scripture texts used in worship that we call lectionaries.
2. About 85 Greek manuscripts containing parts of the New Testament written on papyrus are housed in museums. Some are dated from the second century A.D., but most are from the third and fourth centuries A.D. None of these MSS contain the whole New Testament. Just because these are the oldest copies of the New Testament does not automatically mean they have fewer variants. Many of these were copied rapidly for a local use. Care was not exercised in the process. Therefore, they contain many variants.
3. Codex Sinaiticus, known by the Hebrew letter א (*aleph*) or (01), found at St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf. It dates from the fourth century A.D. and contains both the LXX of the OT and the Greek NT. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
4. Codex Alexandrinus, known as "A" or (02), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was found in Alexandria, Egypt.
5. Codex Vaticanus, known as "B" or (03), found in the Vatican's library in Rome and dates from the middle of the fourth century A.D. It contains both LXX of the Old Testament and Greek New Testament. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
6. Codex Ephraemi, known as "C" or (04), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was partially destroyed.
7. Codex Bezae, known as "D" or (05), a fifth or sixth century Greek manuscript. It is the chief representative of what is called "The Western Text." It contains many additions and was the main Greek witness for the King James translation.
8. The NT MSS can be grouped into three, possibly four, families that share certain characteristics.
 - a. Alexandrian text from Egypt
 - (1) P⁷⁵, P⁶⁶ (about A.D. 200), which record the Gospels
 - (2) P⁴⁶ (about A.D. 225), which records Paul's letters
 - (3) P⁷² (about A.D. 225-250), which records Peter and Jude
 - (4) Codex B, called Vaticanus (about A.D. 325), which includes the whole OT and NT
 - (5) Origen quotes from this text type
 - (6) other MSS which show this text type are א, C, L, W, 33
 - b. Western text from North Africa
 - (1) quotes from North African church fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Old Latin translation
 - (2) quotes from Irenaeus
 - (3) quotes from Tatian and Old Syriac translation
 - (4) Codex D "Bezae" follow this text type
 - c. Eastern Byzantine text from Constantinople
 - (1) this text type is reflected in over 80% of the 5,300 MSS
 - (2) quoted by Antioch of Syria's church fathers, Cappadoceans, Chrysostom, and Therodoret
 - (3) Codex A, in the Gospels only
 - (4) Codex E (eighth century) for full NT
 - d. the fourth possible type is "Caesarean" from Palestine
 - (1) it is primarily seen only in Mark
 - (2) some witnesses to it are P⁴⁵ and W

II. The problems and theories of “lower criticism” or “textual criticism.”

A. How the variants occurred

1. inadvertent or accidental (vast majority of occurrences)
 - a. slip of the eye in hand copying which reads the second instance of two similar words and thereby omits all of the words in between (homoioteleuton)
 - (1) slip of the eye in omitting a double letter word or phrase (haplography)
 - (2) slip of the mind in repeating a phrase or line of a Greek text (dittography)
 - b. slip of the ear in copying by oral dictation where a misspelling occurs (itacism). Often the misspelling implies or spells a similar-sounding Greek word.
 - c. the earliest Greek texts had no chapter or verse divisions, little or no punctuation and no division between words. It is possible to divide the letters in different places forming different words.
2. intentional
 - a. changes were made to improve the grammatical form of the text copied
 - b. changes were made to bring the text into conformity with other biblical texts (harmonization of parallels)
 - c. changes were made by combining two or more variant readings into one long combined text (conflation)
 - d. changes were made to correct a perceived problem in the text (cf. I Cor. 11:27 and I John 5:7-8)
 - e. some additional information as to the historical setting or proper interpretation of the text was placed in the margin by one scribe but placed into the text by a second scribe (cf. John 5:4)

B. The basic tenets of textual criticism (logical guidelines for determining the original reading of a text when variants exist)

1. the most awkward or grammatically unusual text is probably the original
2. the shortest text is probably the original
3. the older text is given more weight because of its historical proximity to the original, everything else being equal
4. MSS that are geographically diverse usually have the original reading
5. doctrinally weaker texts, especially those relating to major theological discussions of the period of manuscript changes, like the Trinity in I John 5:7-8, are to be preferred.
6. the text that can best explain the origin of the other variants
7. two quotes that help show the balance in these troubling variants
 - a. J. Harold Greenlee's book, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, “No Christian doctrine hangs upon a debatable text; and the student of the NT must beware of wanting his text to be more orthodox or doctrinally stronger than is the inspired original” (p. 68).
 - b. W. A. Criswell told Greg Garrison of *The Birmingham News* that he (Criswell) does not believe every word in the Bible is inspired, “at least not every word that has been given to the modern public by centuries of translators.” Criswell said: “I very much am a believer in the textual criticism. As such, I think, the last half of the 16th chapter of Mark is heresy: it's not inspired, it's just concocted...When you compare those manuscripts way back yonder, there was no such thing as that conclusion of the Book of Mark. Somebody added it...”

The patriarch of the SBC inerrantists also claimed that “interpolation” is also evident in John 5, the account of Jesus at the pool of Bethesda. And he discusses the two different accounts of the suicide of Judas (cf. Matt. 27 and Acts 1): “It’s just a different view of the

suicide,” Criswell said. “If it is in the Bible, there is an explanation for it. And the two accounts of the suicide of Judas are in the Bible.” Criswell added, “Textual criticism is a wonderful science in itself. It is not ephemeral, it's not impertinent. It's dynamic and central...”

III. Manuscript problems (textual criticism)

A. Suggested sources for further reading

1. *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, by R.H. Harrison
2. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* by Bruce M. Metzger
3. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, by J. H Greenlee

APPENDIX THREE

GLOSSARY

Adoptionism. This was one of the early views of Jesus' relation to deity. It basically asserted that Jesus was a normal human in every way and was adopted in a special sense by God at his baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11) or at His resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4). Jesus lived such an exemplary life that God, at some point, (baptism, resurrection) adopted Him as His "son" (cf. Rom. 1:4; Phi. 2:9). This was an early church and eighth century minority view. Instead of God becoming a man (the Incarnation) it reverses this and now man becomes God!

It is difficult to verbalize how Jesus, God the Son, pre-existent deity, was rewarded or extolled for an exemplary life. If He was already God, how could He be rewarded? If He had pre-existent divine glory how could He be honored more? Although it is hard for us to comprehend, the Father somehow honored Jesus in a special sense for His perfect fulfillment of the Father's will.

Alexandrian School. This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Alexandria, Egypt in the second century A.D. It uses the basic interpretive principles of Philo, who was a follower of Plato. It is often called the allegorical method. It held sway in the church until the time of the Reformation. Its most able proponents were Origen and Augustine. See Moises Silva, *Has The Church Misread The Bible?* (Academic, 1987)

Alexandrinus. This fifth-century Greek manuscript from Alexandria, Egypt includes the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and most of the New Testament. It is one of our major witnesses to the entire Greek New Testament (except parts of Matthew, John, and II Corinthians). When this manuscript, which is designated "A," and the manuscript designated "B" (Vaticanus) agree on a reading, it is considered to be original by most scholars in most instances.

Allegory. This is a type of biblical interpretation which originally developed within Alexandrian Judaism. It was popularized by Philo of Alexandria. Its basic thrust is the desire to make the Scripture relevant to one's culture or philosophical system by ignoring the Bible's historical setting and/or literary context. It seeks a hidden or spiritual meaning behind every text of Scripture. It must be admitted that Jesus, in Matthew 13, and Paul, in Galatians 4, used allegory to communicate truth. This, however, was in the form of typology, not strictly allegory.

Analytical lexicon. This is a type of research tool which allows one to identify every Greek form in the New Testament. It is a compilation, in Greek alphabetical order, of forms and basic definitions. In combination with an interlinear translation, it allows non-Greek reading believers to analyze New Testament Greek grammatical and syntactic forms.

Analogy of Scripture. This is the phrase used to describe the view that all of the Bible is inspired by God and is, therefore, not contradictory but complementary. This presuppositional affirmation is the basis for the use of parallel passages in interpreting a biblical text.

Ambiguity. This refers to the uncertainty that results in a written document when there are two or more possible meanings or when two or more things are being referred to at the same time. It is possible that John uses purposeful ambiguity (double entendres).

Anthropomorphic. Meaning "having characteristics associated with human beings," this term is used to describe our religious language about God. It comes from the Greek term for mankind. It means that we speak about God as if He were a man. God is described in physical, sociological, and psychological

terms which relate to human beings (cf. Gen. 3:8; I Kgs. 22:19-23). This, of course, is only an analogy. However, there are no categories or terms other than human ones for us to use. Therefore, our knowledge of God, though true, is limited.

Antiochian School. This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Antioch, Syria in the third century A.D. as a reaction to the allegorical method of Alexandria, Egypt. Its basic thrust was to focus on the historical meaning of the Bible. It interpreted the Bible as normal, human literature. This school became involved in the controversy over whether Christ had two natures (Nestorianism) or one nature (fully God and fully man). It was labeled heretical by the Roman Catholic Church and relocated to Persia but the school had little significance. Its basic hermeneutical principles later became interpretive principles of the Classical Protestant Reformers (Luther and Calvin).

Antithetical. This is one of three descriptive terms used to denote the relationship between lines of Hebrew poetry. It relates to lines of poetry which are opposite in meaning (cf. Pro. 10:1, 15:1).

Apocalyptic literature. This was predominantly, possibly even uniquely, a Jewish genre. It was a cryptic type of writing used in times of invasion and occupation of the Jews by foreign world powers. It assumes that a personal, redemptive God created and controls world events, and that Israel is of special interest and care to Him. This literature promises ultimate victory through God's special effort.

It is highly symbolic and fanciful with many cryptic terms. It often expressed truth in colors, numbers, visions, dreams, angelic mediation, secret code words and often a sharp dualism between good and evil.

Some examples of this genre are (1) in the OT, Ezekiel (chapters 36-48), Daniel (chapters 7-12), Zechariah; and (2) in the NT, Matthew 24; Mark 13; II Thessalonians 2 and Revelation.

Apologist (Apologetics). This is from the Greek root for "legal defense." This is a specific discipline within theology which seeks to give evidence and rational arguments for the Christian faith.

A priori. This is basically synonymous with the term "presupposition." It involves reasoning from previously accepted definitions, principles or positions which are assumed to be true. It is that which is accepted without examination or analysis.

Arianism. Arius was a presbyter in the church at Alexandria Egypt in the third and early fourth century. He affirmed that Jesus was pre-existent but not divine (not of the same essence as the Father), possibly following Proverbs 8:22-31. He was challenged by the bishop of Alexandria, who started (A.D. 318) a controversy which lasted many years. Arianism became the official creed of the Eastern Church. The Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 condemned Arius and asserted the full equality and deity of the Son.

Aristotle. He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece, a pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. His influence, even today, reaches into many areas of modern studies. This is because he emphasized knowledge through observation and classification. This is one of the tenets of the scientific method.

Autographs. This is the name given to the original writings of the Bible. These original, handwritten manuscripts have all been lost. Only copies of copies remain. This is the source of many of the textual variants in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and ancient versions.

Bezae. This is a Greek and Latin manuscript of the sixth century A.D. It is designated by "D." It contains the Gospels and Acts and some of the General Epistles. It is characterized by numerous scribal additions. It forms the basis for the "Textus Receptus," the major Greek manuscript tradition behind the King James Version.

- Bias.** This is the term used to describe a strong predisposition toward an object or point of view. It is the mindset in which impartiality is impossible regarding a particular object or point of view. It is a prejudiced position.
- Biblical Authority.** This term is used in a very specialized sense. It is defined as understanding what the original author said to his day and applying this truth to our day. Biblical authority is usually defined as viewing the Bible itself as our only authoritative guide. However, in light of current, improper interpretations, I have limited the concept to the Bible as interpreted by the tenets of the historical-grammatical method.
- Canon.** This is a term used to describe writings which are believed to be uniquely inspired. It is used regarding both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.
- Christocentric.** This is a term used to describe the centrality of Jesus. I use it in connection with the concept that Jesus is Lord of all the Bible. The Old Testament points toward Him and He is its fulfillment and goal (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).
- Commentary.** This is a specialized type of research book. It gives the general background of a biblical book. It then tries to explain the meaning of each section of the book. Some focus on application, while others deal with the text in a more technical way. These books are helpful, but should be used after one has done his own preliminary study. The commentator's interpretations should never be accepted uncritically. Comparing several commentaries from different theological perspectives is usually helpful.
- Concordance.** This is a type of research tool for Bible study. It lists every occurrence of every word in the Old and New Testaments. It helps in several ways: (1) determining the Hebrew or Greek word which lies behind any particular English word; (2) comparing passages where the same Hebrew or Greek word was used; (3) showing where two different Hebrew or Greek terms are translated by the same English word; (4) showing the frequency of the use of certain words in certain books or authors; (5) helping one find a passage in the Bible (cf. Walter Clark's *How to Use New Testament Greek Study Aids*, pp. 54-55).
- Dead Sea Scrolls.** This refers to a series of ancient texts written in Hebrew and Aramaic which were found near the Dead Sea in 1947. They were the religious libraries of sectarian Judaism of the first century. The pressure of Roman occupation and the zealot wars of the 60's caused them to conceal the scrolls in hermetically sealed pottery jars in caves or holes. They have helped us understand the historical setting of first century Palestine and have confirmed the Masoretic Text as being very accurate, at least as far back as the early B.C. era. They are designated by the abbreviation "DSS."
- Deductive.** This method of logic or reasoning moves from general principles to specific applications by means of reason. It is opposite from inductive reasoning, which reflects the scientific method by moving from observed specifics to general conclusions (theories).
- Dialectical.** This is the method of reasoning whereby that which seems contradictory or paradoxical is held together in a tension, seeking a unified answer which includes both sides of the paradox. Many biblical doctrines have dialectical pairs, predestination—free will; security—perseverance; faith—works; decision—discipleship; Christian freedom—Christian responsibility.
- Diaspora.** This is the technical Greek term used by Palestinian Jews to describe other Jews who live outside the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land.
- Dynamic equivalent.** This is a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or

Greek word, to a “paraphrase” where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is “the dynamic equivalent” which attempts to take the original text seriously, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart’s *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35 and in Robert Bratcher’s Introduction to the TEV.

Eclectic. This term is used in connection with textual criticism. It refers to the practice of choosing readings from different Greek manuscripts in order to arrive at a text which is supposed to be close to the original autographs. It rejects the view that any one family of Greek manuscripts captures the originals.

Eisegesis. This is the opposite of exegesis. If exegesis is a “leading out” of the original author’s intent, this term implies a “leading in” of a foreign idea or opinion.

Etymology. This is an aspect of word study that tries to ascertain the original meaning of a word. From this root meaning, specialized usages are more easily identified. In interpretation, etymology is not the main focus, rather the contemporary meaning and usage of a word.

Exegesis. This is the technical term for the practice of interpreting a specific passage. It means “to lead out” (of the text) implying that our purpose is to understand the original author’s intent in light of historical setting, literary context, syntax and contemporary word meaning.

Genre. This is a French term that denotes different types of literature. The thrust of the term is the division of literary forms into categories which share common characteristics: historical narrative, poetry, proverb, apocalyptic and legislation.

Gnosticism. Most of our knowledge of this heresy comes from the Gnostic writings of the second century. However, the incipient ideas were present in the first century (and before).

Some stated tenets of Valentian and Cerinthian Gnosticism of the second century are: (1) matter and spirit were co-eternal (an ontological dualism). Matter is evil, spirit is good. God, who is spirit, cannot be directly involved with molding evil matter; (2) there are emanations (*eons* or angelic levels) between God and matter. The last or lowest one was YHWH of the OT, who formed the universe (*kosmos*); (3) Jesus was an emanation like YHWH but higher on the scale, closer to the true God. Some put Him as the highest but still less than God and certainly not incarnate Deity (cf. John 1:14). Since matter is evil, Jesus could not have a human body and still be Divine. He was a spiritual phantom (cf. I John 1:1-3; 4:1-6); and (4) salvation was obtained through faith in Jesus plus special knowledge, which is only known by special persons. Knowledge (passwords) was needed to pass through heavenly spheres. Jewish legalism was also required to reach God.

The Gnostic false teachers advocated two opposite ethical systems: (1) for some, lifestyle was totally unrelated to salvation. For them, salvation and spirituality were encapsulated into secret knowledge (passwords) through the angelic spheres (*eons*); or (2) for others, lifestyle was crucial to salvation. They emphasized an ascetic lifestyle as evidence of true spirituality.

Hermeneutics. This is the technical term for the principles which guide exegesis. It is both a set of specific guidelines and an art/gift. Biblical, or sacred, hermeneutics is usually divided into two categories: general principles and special principles. These relate to the different types of literature found in the Bible. Each different type (genre) has its own unique guidelines but also shares some common assumptions and procedures of interpretation.

Higher Criticism. This is the procedure of biblical interpretation which focuses on the historical setting and literary structure of a particular biblical book.

Idiom. This word is used for the phrases found in different cultures which have specialized meaning not connected to the usual meaning of the individual terms. Some modern examples are: “that was awfully good,” or “you just kill me.” The Bible also contains these types of phrases.

Illumination. This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation—God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration—He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination—He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

Inductive. This is a method of logic or reasoning which moves from the particulars to the whole. It is the empirical method of modern science. This is basically the approach of Aristotle.

Interlinear. This is a type of research tool which allows those who do not read a biblical language to be able to analyze its meaning and structure. It places the English translation on a word for word level immediately under the original biblical language. This tool, combined with an “analytical lexicon,” will give the forms and basic definitions of Hebrew and Greek.

Inspiration. This is the concept that God has spoken to mankind by guiding the biblical authors to accurately and clearly record His revelation. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation—God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration—He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination—He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure

Language of description. This is used in connection with the idioms in which the Old Testament is written. It speaks of our world in terms of the way things appear to the five senses. It is not a scientific description, nor was it meant to be.

Legalism. This attitude is characterized by an over-emphasis on rules or ritual. It tends to rely on the human performance of regulations as a means of acceptance by God. It tends to depreciate relationship and elevates performance, both of which are important aspects of the covenantal relationship between a holy God and sinful humanity.

Literal. This is another name for the textually-focused and historical method of hermeneutics from Antioch. It means that interpretation involves the normal and obvious meaning of human language, although it still recognizes the presence of figurative language.

Literary genre. This refers to the distinct forms that human communication can take, such as poetry or historical narrative. Each type of literature has its own special hermeneutical procedures in addition to the general principles for all written literature.

Literary unit. This refers to the major thought divisions of a biblical book. It can be made up of a few verses, paragraphs or chapters. It is a self-contained unit with a central subject.

Lower criticism. See “textual criticism.”

Manuscript. This term relates to the different copies of the Greek New Testament. Usually they are divided into the different types by (1) material on which they are written (papyrus, leather), or (2) the form of the writing itself (all capitals or running script). It is abbreviated by “MS” (singular) or “MSS” (plural).

Masoretic Text. This refers to the ninth century A.D. Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament produced by generations of Jewish scholars which contain vowel points and other textual notes. It forms the basic text for our English Old Testament. Its text has been historically confirmed by the Hebrew MSS, especially Isaiah, known from the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is abbreviated by “MT.”

Metonymy. This is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is used to represent something else associated with it. As an example, “the kettle is boiling” actually means “the water within the kettle is boiling.”

Muratorian Fragments. This is a list of the canonical books of the New Testament. It was written in Rome before A.D. 200. It gives the same twenty-seven books as the Protestant NT. This clearly shows the local churches in different parts of the Roman Empire had “practically” set the canon before the major church councils of the fourth century.

Natural revelation. This is one category of God’s self-disclosure to man. It involves the natural order (Rom. 1:19-20) and the moral consciousness (Rom. 2:14-15). It is spoken of in Ps. 19:1-6 and Romans 1-2. It is distinct from special revelation, which is God’s specific self-disclosure in the Bible and supremely in Jesus of Nazareth.

This theological category is being re-emphasized by the “old earth” movement among Christian scientists (e.g., the writings of Hugh Ross). They use this category to assert that all truth is God’s truth. Nature is an open door to knowledge about God; it is different from special revelation (the Bible). It allows modern science the freedom to research the natural order. In my opinion it is a wonderful new opportunity to witness to the modern scientific western world.

Nestorianism. Nestorius was the patriarch of Constantinople in the fifth century. He was trained in Antioch of Syria and affirmed that Jesus had two natures, one fully human and one fully divine. This view deviated from the orthodox one nature view of Alexandria. Nestorius’ main concern was the title “mother of God,” given to Mary. Nestorius was opposed by Cyril of Alexandria and, by implication, his own Antiochian training. Antioch was the headquarters of the historical-grammatical-textual approach to biblical interpretation, while Alexandria was the headquarters of the four-fold (allegorical) school of interpretation. Nestorius was ultimately removed from office and exiled.

Original author. This refers to the actual authors/writers of Scripture.

Papyri. This is a type of writing material from Egypt. It is made from river reeds. It is the material upon which our oldest copies of the Greek New Testament are written.

Parallel passages. They are part of the concept that all of the Bible is God-given and, therefore, is its own best interpreter and balancer of paradoxical truths. This is also helpful when one is attempting to interpret an unclear or ambiguous passage. They also help one find the clearest passage on a given subject as well as all other Scriptural aspects of a given subject.

Paraphrase. This is the name of a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from “word to word” correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word to a “paraphrase” where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is “the dynamic equivalent” which attempts to take serious the original text but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart’s *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35.

- Paragraph.** This is the basic interpretive literary unit in prose. It contains one central thought and its development. If we stay with its major thrust we will not major on minors or miss the original author's intent.
- Parochialism.** This relates to biases which are locked into a local theological/cultural setting. It does not recognize the transcultural nature of biblical truth or its application.
- Paradox.** This refers to those truths which seem to be contradictory, yet both are true, although in tension with each other. They frame truth by presenting it from opposite sides. Much biblical truth is presented in paradoxical (or dialectical) pairs. Biblical truths are not isolated stars, but are constellations made up of the pattern of stars.
- Plato.** He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece. His philosophy greatly influenced the early church through the scholars of Alexandria, Egypt, and later, Augustine. He posited that everything on earth was illusionary and a mere copy of a spiritual archetype. Theologians later equated Plato's "forms/ideas" with the spiritual realm.
- Presupposition.** This refers to our preconceived understanding of a matter. Often we form opinions or judgments about issues before we approach the Scriptures themselves. This predisposition is also known as a bias, an *a priori* position, an assumption or a preunderstanding.
- Proof-texting.** This is the practice of interpreting Scripture by quoting a verse without regard for its immediate context or larger context in its literary unit. This removes the verses from the original author's intent and usually involves the attempt to prove a personal opinion while asserting biblical authority.
- Rabbinical Judaism.** This stage of the life of the Jewish people began in Babylonian Exile (586-538 B.C.). As the influence of the Priests and the Temple was removed, local synagogues became the focus of Jewish life. These local centers of Jewish culture, fellowship, worship and Bible study became the focus of the national religious life. In Jesus' day this "religion of the scribes" was parallel to that of the priests. At the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the scribal form, dominated by the Pharisees, controlled the direction of Jewish religious life. It is characterized by a practical, legalistic interpretation of the Torah as explained in the oral tradition (Talmud).
- Revelation.** This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation—God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration—He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination—He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.
- Semantic field.** This refers to the total range of meanings associated with a word. It is basically the different connotations a word has in different contexts.
- Septuagint.** This is the name given to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Tradition says that it was written in seventy days by seventy Jewish scholars for the library of Alexandria, Egypt. The traditional date is around 250 B.C. (in reality it possibly took over one hundred years to complete). This translation is significant because (1) it gives us an ancient text to compare with the Masoretic Hebrew text; (2) it shows us the state of Jewish interpretation in the third and second century B.C.; (3) it gives us the Jewish Messianic understanding before the rejection of Jesus. Its abbreviation is "LXX."
- Sinaiticus.** This is a Greek manuscript of the fourth century A.D. It was found by the German scholar, Tischendorf, at St. Catherine's monastery on Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mt. Sinai. This

manuscript is designated by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet called “*aleph*” [א]. It contains both the Old and the entire New Testaments. It is one of our most ancient uncial MSS.

Spiritualizing. This term is synonymous with allegorizing in the sense that it removes the historical and literary context of a passage and interprets it on the basis of other criteria.

Synonymous. This refers to terms with exact or very similar meanings (although in reality no two words have a complete semantic overlap). They are so closely related that they can replace each other in a sentence without loss of meaning. It is also used to designate one of the three forms of Hebrew poetic parallelism. In this sense it refers to two lines of poetry that express the same truth (cf. Ps. 103:3).

Syntax. This is a Greek term which refers to the structure of a sentence. It relates to the ways parts of a sentence are put together to make a complete thought.

Synthetical. This is one of the three terms that relates to types of Hebrew poetry. This term speaks of lines of poetry which build on one another in a cumulative sense, sometimes called “climatic” (cf. Ps. 19:7-9).

Systematic theology. This is a stage of interpretation which tries to relate the truths of the Bible in a unified and rational manner. It is a logical, rather than mere historical, presentation of Christian theology by categories (God, man, sin, salvation, etc.).

Talmud. This is the title for the codification of the Jewish Oral Tradition. The Jews believe it was given orally by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In reality it appears to be the collective wisdom of the Jewish teachers through the years. There are two different written versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian and the shorter, unfinished Palestinian.

Textual criticism. This is the study of the manuscripts of the Bible. Textual criticism is necessary because no originals exist and the copies differ from each other. It attempts to explain the variations and arrive (as close as possible) to the original wording of the autographs of the Old and New Testaments. It is often called “lower criticism.”

Textus Receptus. This designation developed into Elzevir’s edition of the Greek NT in 1633 A.D. Basically it is a form of the Greek NT that was produced from a few late Greek manuscripts and Latin versions of Erasmus (1510-1535), Stephanus (1546-1559) and Elzevir (1624-1678). In *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 27, A. T. Robertson says “the Byzantine text is practically the Textus Receptus.” The Byzantine text is the least valuable of the three families of early Greek manuscripts (Western, Alexandrian and Byzantine). It contains the accumulation errors of centuries of hand-copied texts. However, A. T. Robertson also says “the Textus Receptus has preserved for us a substantially accurate text” (p. 21). This Greek manuscript tradition (especially Erasmus’ third edition of 1522) forms the basis of the King James Version of 1611 A.D.

Torah. This is the Hebrew term for “teaching.” It came to be the official title for the writings of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). It is, for the Jews, the most authoritative division of the Hebrew canon.

Typological. This is a specialized type of interpretation. Usually it involves New Testament truth found in Old Testament passages by means of an analogical symbol. This category of hermeneutics was a major element of the Alexandrian method. Because of the abuse of this type of interpretation, one should limit its use to specific examples recorded in the New Testament.

Vaticanus. This is the Greek manuscript of the fourth century A.D. It was found in the Vatican’s library. It originally contained all the Old Testament, Apocrypha and New Testament. However, some parts

were lost (Genesis, Psalms, Hebrews, the Pastorals, Philemon and Revelation). It is a very helpful manuscript in determining the original wording of the autographs. It is designated by a capital “B.”

Vulgate. This is the name of Jerome’s Latin translation of the Bible. It became the basic or “common” translation for the Roman Catholic Church. It was done in the 380's A.D.

Wisdom literature. This was a genre of literature common in the ancient near east (and modern world). It basically was an attempt to instruct a new generation on guidelines for successful living through poetry, proverb, or essay. It was addressed more to the individual than to corporate society. It did not use allusions to history, but was based on life experiences and observation. In the Bible, Job through Song of Songs assumed the presence and worship of YHWH, but this religious world view is not explicit in every human experience every time.

As a genre it stated general truths. However, this genre cannot be used in every specific situation. These are general statements that do not always apply to every individual situation.

These sages dared to ask the hard questions of life. Often they challenged traditional religious views (Job and Ecclesiastes). They form a balance and tension to the easy answers about life’s tragedies.

World picture and worldview. These are companion terms. They are both philosophical concepts related to creation. The term “world picture” refers to “the how” of creation while “worldview” relates to “the Who.” These terms are relevant to the interpretation that Genesis 1-2 deals primarily with the Who, not the how, of creation.

YHWH. This is the Covenant name for God in the Old Testament. It is defined in Exod. 3:14. It is the CAUSATIVE form of the Hebrew term “to be.” The Jews were afraid to pronounce the name, lest they take it in vain; therefore, they substituted the Hebrew term *Adonai*, “lord.” This is how this covenant name is translated in English.

APPENDIX FOUR

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit; truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life, and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday, but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love."