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# THE BOOK OF ROMANS

**BIBLE STUDY 2022-23**

*Notes by Dr. James E. Allman*

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AWARE | ALIVE | AWAKE | FREE | FAITHFUL | FRUITFUL

## **Christ We Proclaim**

by warning and teaching all people with all wisdom  
so that we may present every person mature in Christ.

Toward this goal we also labor,  
struggling according to His power  
that powerfully works in us.

| Colossians 1:28-29 |

### **The Book of Romans**

Fall-Spring Bible Study 2022-2023

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## Introduction

Paul wrote the book of Romans from Corinth during his third missionary journey, sometime around AD 55. He had more than one reason for writing the book. One was the collection he was making for the impoverished saints in Jerusalem. He wrote to solicit the prayers of Roman Christians that the Jewish believers would accept this act of grace from Gentile saints. Second, since he was on his way to Spain, he wanted to prepare the Roman churches for his coming. He wanted them to accept him when he would come and help him on his way to Spain. Most important, however, Paul wrote to address a problem that had arisen between the Jewish and Gentile believers within the fellowship in Rome.

The climax of the book comes in chapters 14 and 15 where Paul treats the problems between the weak and the strong. The weak (those whose consciences were more restrictive than Scripture) condemned the strong for eating meat. The strong (those whose consciences approximated the standards of Scripture) despised the weak (see 14.2-3). The goal of the teaching was to instruct the Romans in living by Christian liberty, the freedom Christians have to limit their behavior as much as is necessary to help others grow spiritually. To get them to adopt Christian liberty, though, he would have to demonstrate that both weak and strong were wrong in their treatment of each other. Romans 15.7 may be the key verse in the book: Wherefore, receive one another, as Christ received you, for the glory of God. To reach that goal, he had to teach all of them grace.

The weak were not all Jewish, but they were all convinced that eating meat was utterly incompatible with faith in God. Apparently they also believed in Sabbath observance since Paul brought that issue up as well in Romans 14.<sup>1</sup> The weak brothers in Rome did not require eating meat as a test of relationship with God, since Paul did not attack their position as false doctrine. He approaches them as those who improperly understand the gospel of Christ, who need correcting. Their judgmental attitude is not heresy, but it is far worse than eating meat.

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<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Gentiles also had special days, but not for the worship of Jesus.

The strong were not all Gentiles, either (Paul called himself strong in 15.1), but they, like the weak, had failed to understand grace. Grace means that the strong should accept those who differ with them over particulars of Christian living and limit their own practices for the sake of weaker brothers. Thus the stronger have the greater responsibility under grace, and the greater need to review the grace of God in the gospel.

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## Structure of the Epistle

To reach these goals, Paul constructed his epistle to teach grace. The first eleven chapters teach “how Christ received” believers, and chapters 12 to 15 teach how to “receive one another … for the glory of God” (15.7).

Romans 1.1-15 form the epistolary introduction to the book, an introduction that already begins to address the issues to be developed in the letter. Chapters 1.16–11.36 form the first major section of the letter, with 12.1–15.13 forming the second. Romans 15.14–16.27 contain personal information and a standard epistolary closing. Like the introduction, the conclusion reinforces the themes of the letter. Chapters 1–11 divide into two portions. In chapters 1–8 Paul develops the main issues needed to address the disunity within the Romans community. The first eight chapters are summed up in 1.17, “The just shall live by faith,” or perhaps better, “The just by faith shall live.”<sup>2</sup> Within that section (1–8), the first four chapters demonstrate that there is no righteousness for humanity apart from faith. Then chapters 5–8 discuss the life of those who are right with God by faith. The second part of chapters 1–11, chapters 9–11 become necessary because of the implications of the first eight chapters, namely the place of Israel in the plan of God. Did Israel’s unbelief invalidate the promises of God? Indeed, did their unbelief prove Paul’s gospel wrong? Would they have any part in the fulfillment of God’s promises? Romans 9–11 then answer these questions, affirming that God will ultimately save Israel apart from works of the law.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a translation proposed by C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. 2 vols. The International Critical Commentary, ed. J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975, 1979)

The second major part of the letter is Romans 12.1–15.13 where Paul explains the implications of his teaching on grace. In this section Paul includes the introduction in 12.1-2 calling on the readers to respond to the mercies of God, rehearsed in Romans 1–11, by offering their bodies as living and holy sacrifices, based on the renewal that transforms their lives. They will offer this living sacrifice in three ways. First, those who offer living sacrifice will minister to others in their spiritual gifting (12.3-8). Second, those who offer living sacrifice will love one another genuinely (12.9–13.10). These calls to living sacrifice are made more important by the immediacy of the coming of Christ (13.11-14). Finally, those who offer living sacrifice will “accept one another” on the pattern of Christ’s acceptance, mediated to us by grace, for the glory of God (14.1–15.13).



## 2 Discussion of the Book

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### Epistolary Introduction, 1.1-15

Since Romans is a letter it begins in normal epistolary style. The passage falls into two parts, the epistolary greetings in verses 1-7 and the thanksgiving in verses 8-15. A standard letter greeting in the first century included the identification of the author (v. 1), and of the addressees (v. 7), followed by a prayer (v. 7b). Paul expands his greeting by modeling for his readers the very attitude that he seeks from them. If he is called by Christ as an apostle of the king (v. 1), they are beloved by God and called to be saints (v. 7). He accepts them already as Christ had received him. He closes this paragraph with his normal prayer for grace and peace to come to his readers from God the Father and the Lord Jesus.

The thanksgiving comes in verses 8-15. He thanks God for the Romans' faith, known throughout the world, and affirms his desire to spend some time with them. Here again, he models Christlike acceptance for them. When he comes to Rome, he will bring them spiritual enrichment, and he expects to be strengthened by their faith, too.

Indeed, grace has obligated him to all peoples, so that he longs to preach the gospel in Rome as well.

#### ▷ 1.5 The Obedience of Faith?

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## The Body of the Letter

### Part One: How Christ Received Us, 1.16–11.36

We have already reviewed the overall structure of this section.<sup>3</sup> After a brief summarizing introduction (1.16- 17), Paul will enter upon the discussion of the way Christ has received sinners (cp. 15.7). Within this discussion there are two main parts. Chapters 1 to 8 include the demonstration that righteousness is by faith (1.16– 4.25; cp. 1.17) and the discussion of the life of those right with God by faith (5–8; cp. 1.17 again). Then chapters 9–11 deal with Israel’s place in the gospel and in God’s plan.

▷ **Key Verses:**

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<sup>3</sup> Many other approaches to the structure of Romans appear in the literature. This approach commends itself to me as fitting with the structuring hints in the book. For a full discussion of this approach, see Cranfield.

## **Introduction, 1.16-17**

Of supreme importance for the argument of Romans, Paul quotes here from Habakkuk 2.4, “The just by faith shall live.”<sup>4</sup> Here Paul summarizes the message of chapters 1–8, as suggested above. At this point it is important to define righteousness and faith. Righteousness is often viewed as synonymous with obedience (see 1.5)<sup>5</sup> to God’s commandments. For reasons that will become clear in the discussion of chapters 3 and 4, righteousness for Paul is not keeping commandments, even God’s. Thus, it seems best to define it relationally, as right relationship with God. Faith, we will argue (4.9–11), is that right relationship. In brief, faith consists of four elements. First, knowledge of the person and plan of God, and second assent, that is, acceptance of what one knows as true. Third, faith at its heart is living in a loving relationship with God in the person of Jesus. From this love relationship flow changed behavior and making oneself vulnerable to our loved One. Entailed in this relationship, fourth, is hope, confident expectation about the future (see for all of this the discussion in 4.17–25). When Paul says “the just by faith,” these are the things he meant.

### **▷ The Righteousness of God?**

### **▷ From Faith to Faith?**

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4 This is, as above, following Cranfield. Such rearrangement is possible, given the Greek text.

5 In 1.5 I hold that *pistis* is an appositional genitive, so that *hypakoe* is not obedience to rules: this is an ironical statement akin to Jesus’ words in John 6, “This is the work of God, that you believe, in the One He has sent.” In other words, it is no work at all.

▷ **What is Faith?**

**Knowledge**

**Assent**

**Fiducia**

**Hope**

▷ **What is Righteousness?**

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**Righteousness by Faith, 1.18–4.25**

This first major subsection of Romans undertakes the demonstration that true righteousness is by faith and not by works of law. This issue bears heavily on the problem identified above, the strife between the weak and strong (14.1–15.13). The weak may only condemn the strong if they believe that one's behavior gains

the favor of God or provides a better access to God (cp. 1 Cor. 8.8).<sup>6</sup> Paul must show that one's works cannot commend to God before he can establish his claim that only by faith can one have right relationship with God.

The unit consists of two sections. First, Paul shows that sin prohibits humanity from achieving righteousness by works (1.18–3.20). Whatever we say about this section, we must keep its conclusion in mind, given in 3.19-20: And we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law that all the world might become guilty before God. For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified before Him, since by the law is the knowledge of sin.

The second section (3.21–4.25) shows how God does accomplish for us right relationship with Himself. First, He has provided redemption and propitiation through Christ to give us the right relationship (justification), without works and by grace (3.21-31). Then Paul proves that our only relationship is by faith (4.1-12), with the implications that flow from that reality (4.13-17a). Finally, he shows us the faith that is right relationship with God by showing us Abraham's faith, in the event of the conception of Isaac (4.17b-24).

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6 This discussion omits reference to the broadly influential "New Perspective on Paul": see E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*; J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, Word Biblical Commentary; *ibid.*, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Paul*; and N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*. The debate is too complex to summarize here, but sufficient critique and response to the New Perspective appears in Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*; Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective*; A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*; and Guy Prentiss Waters, *Justification and the New Perspective on Paul* (given in order of significance)

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## There is none Righteous, not even one (1.18–3.20)

**Structure of the passage.** The course of thought here has often been misunderstood. Students of Romans often hold that 1.18-32 refers to the history of the human race beginning in Adam's day, or to the evaluation of the Gentiles. The way Paul has constructed the argument, however, requires that 1.18-32 refer to the whole of humanity. The key to this interpretation is 2.1, *dio*, therefore. That conjunction indicates that chapter 2 is a conclusion drawn from what precedes. If the first chapter is only about Gentiles, no valid inference may be drawn about Jewish people. Since Paul does draw such an inference, Jewish humanity must be under the indictment.

The structure of 1.187–3.20, assumed here, is threefold. Romans 1.18-32 surveys the sinful condition of the human race and our lost condition under the present wrath of God. Romans 2.1–3.8 focuses attention on self-righteous humanity (2.1-16) and then specifically on Jewish humanity. All of these, while holding to their obedience, stand condemned because they violate the very commandments they depend on in condemning others (consider the connection with 14.1–15.13). Finally, 3.9-20 brings the discussion to a conclusion by quoting Scripture that shows Israel condemned by the “law” and drawing the final inference, that no one is righteous by the works of the law.

### ▷ Paul's Aim:

### **Sinful humanity under God's present wrath, 1.18-32.**

Paul constructs this section in four paragraphs: 18-23, 24-25, 26-27, 28-32. The basic point of the section comes in 18-23, where he lays out the primary issues of the whole unit, namely, that God's wrath stands against all human unrighteousness (1.18). The human race has suppressed the truth God has revealed, that He exists and is powerful. In our wicked suppression of the truth, we exchanged God's glory for the glory of the creature, thus becoming fools.

Verses 24-25 and 26-27, the next two paragraphs, give God's increasingly severe response to the increasing sin of mankind.

Humanity corrupts itself as it has corrupted its view of God.

"Handing over" is the function of God's present wrath. Present wrath gives sinners new opportunity to carry out more of the sin in their own hearts. Sin, then, is its own judgment upon the sinner. The final paragraph, 28-32, gives the end of this cycle of sin. God finally hands the sinful race over to a disapproved mind that practices sin, but even worse takes pleasure in the sin of others.<sup>7</sup> Since these things are true, the weak and the strong at Rome have no basis for either condemning or despising one another. Paul will later show that food and drink are not the essential concerns of the kingdom (14.17). Therefore, partaking is no sin and abstaining is no shame.

#### ▷ **What is Sin?**

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<sup>7</sup> The list of sins in 29-32 is important, but the individual terms are not given for our particular study. Paul uses the figure asyndeton in this case, the absence of conjunctions, to indicate that the important point is at the end in verse 32

## SECTION: The sinfulness of self-righteous humanity, 2.1–3:8

The human race has no defence for its sin (1.20). Therefore (*dio*) self-righteous humanity also is without defence for its sin (2.1). the section before us has two large parts, 2.1- 16 and 2.17–3.8. In 2.1-16 Paul selects from all humanity the self-righteous who condemn themselves even in judging the sin of others. Then, in 2.17–3.8 he focuses even more closely on self-righteous Jewish humanity who, while they have the law, violate the very thing in which they boast.

### The self-righteous are self-condemned, 2.1-16

Paul develops this passage in three stages, 1-3, 4-11, and 12-16. The first paragraph explains why the self-righteous are under the same condemnation as the rest of humanity: they who condemn commit the very sins they condemn in others. Thus, their condemnation condemns themselves.

Consequently, they will not escape God's wrath in judgment. Of course, this bears directly on the purpose of Romans developed here. Those weak brothers in the church must avoid their condemning attitudes, for they will find themselves condemned upon further reflection. Paul presses this further in the rest of the section.

Those who continue to condemn show that they despise God's goodness that aims to lead them to repentance (2.4-11).<sup>8</sup> They are rather laying up treasure with God, but it is a treasure of wrath to

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<sup>8</sup> This paragraph is often offered to show that Paul believes in salvation by works (so, verses 7 and 10). One should recognize, though, that Paul is not here developing his doctrine of salvation; he is showing how one cannot be justified (3.19-20). Thus, verses 7 and 10, while true as far as they go, are not Paul's premises; they are part of the argumentation to show that "no flesh shall be justified in God's sight by works of the law."

be collected in the day of God's wrath. God shows no favoritism. He rewards each according to his works. Since none of the self-righteous have escaped death, then none of them is rewarded with eternal life.

Verse 12 begins to focus the discussion even further, for now Paul introduces the notion of law. Merely having and hearing the law grant no preference before God. God's favor comes only to those who do the law, whether Jew or Gentile. Indeed, when the Gentile who keeps the law, it is shown that the law is "written on the heart." One should note that Paul's contemporary, the Jewish philosopher Philo, also observes that there are Gentiles who keep the law. Thus the paragraph 12-16 confronts the self-righteous Jew who Jew who condemns with his own condemnation before God.

▷ **Circumcision**

**Jewish self-righteous people actually blaspheme God by their law breaking, 2.17–3.8**

Picking up the contrast between Gentiles and Jews from the preceding section, Paul now turns fully to Jewish self-righteous people. His goal is to show that no one can gain favor with God by works, and now he must focus on his own Jewish people who take such pride in their privileges from God. The passage falls into five paragraphs, 2.17-24, 25-29; 3.1-2, 3-6, and 7-8. Each addresses the privileges that Jews enjoy and the way self-righteous Jews defame God by their lives.

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**Self-righteous Jews invalidate their great privileges by their transgression of the law, 2.17-24**

Paul lists two great privileges that God had given to Israel, privileges that ennable the people (2.17-20). Yet, their very transgression of the law they teach blasphemes God among the Gentiles. Paul's list of sins is surely only representative, not exhaustive. The point is not that all Jews commit these sins, but that they violate the law that they proclaim. Even the prophets make this charge against Israel (cp. Is. 52.5).

**Jewish privileges only benefit those who keep the commandments, 2.25-29**

The self-righteous Jew does have great privileges, yet his disobedience to God's law means that obedient but uncircumcised Gentiles will condemn him. Genuine Jewishness is inner circumcision, not external; only true circumcision receives God's praise.

**Being Jewish does undeniably mean great privilege, 3.1-2**

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Paul's words do not negate all privilege for Jews. They received, as a supreme privilege, the oracles of God.

**However, judgment for Jewish unbelief seems to invalidate God's faithfulness, 3.3-6**

It is here that Paul makes explicit the point of this section, the incongruity perceived between God's judgment and His faithfulness. Scripture affirms both. God is just in judging sin (Ps. 51.4), and He is faithful (Rom. 3.3). Man's, even Israel's, unrighteousness does not invalidate God's righteousness. God is true even if that makes every human a liar.

### That Jewish unbelief brings glory to God does not validate sin, 3.7-8

These verses contain two charges made against Paul. First, Paul states the charge that the claim that sin honors God means that God should not judge. The second, in verse 8, charges that Paul counsels that sinning causes good to multiply. Both charges he rejects—the judgment of such is just.

### Conclusion: There is no one righteous, not even one, 3.9-20

The conclusion to all that Paul has said since 1.18i now comes in 3.9-20. Paul leads in to the conclusion in v. 9, then gives a series of Old Testament quotations supporting his argument, in vv. 10-18. Finally, he summarizes his conclusion in 3.19-20.

*We Jews have no defense against the condemnation of being sinners,* 3.9 Jewish self-righteous people cannot escape the common condemnation of humanity for sinfulness. This is proved by the Scriptures themselves.

*The Scriptures demonstrate Jewish sinfulness,* 3.10-18. This chain of Old Testament quotations comes to demonstrate that all humanity, including Jewish humanity, are condemned under sin. Verses 10-12 (quoting Ps. 14.1-3) demonstrate God's judgment that the human race has abandoned the good. Verses 13-14 (quoting Pss. 5.9, 140.3, and 10.7) describe the sinfulness of human speech, destructive and murderous. Then verses 15-17 describe the sinfulness of human deeds (citing Isa. 59.7 and Prov. 1.16). Finally, verse 18 gives the reason for human sin: there is no fear of God in them.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Sometimes people will object that fear of God is not a positive concept, in light of 1 John 4.18. Two observations will assist us in this connection. First, Paul is talking about lost

*The Scriptural condemnation includes Jews, leaving everyone condemned before God, on the principle of works, 3.19-20. Since the Scriptures have spoken, all humanity is judged, both Gentile and Jewish. Thus no one has any defence before God. Therefore, no one can receive God's approval even by God's law since the law gives only the knowledge of sin (the concept is developed in chapter 7). Therefore, by the works of law there can be no acceptance with God.*

### **Connection to the Argument of Romans**

If we have been correct in identifying the occasion for Romans, the section 1.18–3.20 should relate to it, and it certainly does. The weak have thought that their refusal to eat meat commends them to God, while eating meat must be condemned. Now, however, Paul points these people to the reality of their situation. Refusal to eat meat can never commend anyone to God; eating meat cannot detract from our relationship with Him. Since no one keeps the law, then no one can be justified by it. Therefore, neither can breaking the law violate our justification. (Of course, we should note here that the Mosaic law never prohibited eating meat.) The final reality is that even those who refuse meat are given the knowledge of sin by law. They gain no righteousness by law; even more, they gain no righteousness by keeping their own traditions. Paul instructs us, rather, to receive one another, as Christ received us, for the glory of God (15.7).

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people here. Therefore 1 John 4.18 is not really relevant. Second, the Bible identifies two kinds of fear, one negative and the other positive. Exodus 20.20 gives both. At Mt. Sinai Moses told the people, “Do not fear [the negative, bad fear that keeps one from relationship with God; cp. Exod. 20.18-19], God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of God [the positive, good fear that motivates one in relationship with God] might be before you that you will not sin.”

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## Justification by Faith Alone, 3.21–4.25

In 1.18–3.20 Paul has shown that no person at all can be right with God by works. Yet in 1.16-17 he acknowledged that people exist who are, in fact, right in God's eyes. So Paul turns to reveal how one can be right with God. To accomplish this, he does two things. First, he explains how sinners can be right with God and yet how boasting can be excluded—by the work of God in Christ, 3.21-31. Second, he demonstrates that this righteousness is by faith alone, 4.1-25.

### How Christ Received Us—Dying for Sinners, 3.21-31

Paul has affirmed that people, though sinners, can be right with God. Now he will show what God has done to make this possible. In the section 3.21-31 Paul accomplishes three things. First, he redefines righteousness as right relationship with God, 21-22. Second he explains the work of Christ that brings that right relationship, 23-24.

Finally, he shows that this work excludes all boasting because only God's grace accomplishes the righteousness God requires, 27-31.

### The redefinition of righteousness, 21-22a

Paul has shown that law righteousness is not available. This means, finally, that there is no righteousness that God can accept in our obedience. So he must redefine the righteousness that God offers. It is a without-law-through-faith righteousness, faith-righteousness or what we have called “right relationship with God.”

### Jesus's work in providing righteousness, 3.22b-26

God provides right relationship with Himself (i.e., justification) to sinners through the work of Christ. This comes to sinners without their paying for it, for no reason in themselves (dorean, cp. the use of this word in 2 Cor. 11.7; 2 Thess. 3.8; and in the LXX, Gen. 29.15; Exod. 21.2, 11), by the grace of God. That grace, however, is not costless, since God redeemed sinners from His own wrath in the cross of Christ (Rom. 3.24) thus achieving propitiation (25). All of this aimed at vindicating God's own righteousness in dealing with sins past (25) and in dealing with those sinners who put their faith in Jesus (26).<sup>10</sup>

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10 There is an increasing number of Greek scholars who are arguing that the phrase present in v. 26, *pistis Christou*, or the similar phrase, *pistis theou*, should be translated “faithfulness of Christ,” or “faithfulness of God,” as in Rom. 3.3. Most of the places where the word *pistis* is followed by a personal noun or noun substitute in the genitive, the phrase is translated by this subjective genitive, as in Rom. 4.16; Matt. 9.2. Examples do exist, however, in which *pistis* plus a personal noun or noun substitute occurs, but where the context supports the objective genitive reading (cp. Mark 11.22; James 2.1; and perhaps Rev. 14.12). It remains, however, true that all of the examples in Paul are open to interpretation, so that at present I am not able to make a hard and fast rule by which to make decisions in any given case. Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 115-116 discusses the issues here, opting for the subjective genitive.

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▷ **Justification / Righteousness**

▷ **Freely**

▷ **Grace**

▷ **Propitiation**

▷ **Forgiveness**

▷ **What Is Law?**

**Grace in Jesus excludes all boasting, 3.27-31**

**23**

All human boasting, then, is excluded by grace, since works cannot. Thus, God justifies both Jew and Gentile by faith. While works and boasting are excluded, though, this principle of faith in fact establishes the law. This last idea comes to the fore only in chapters 6 and 8.

**SECTION: How Christ Receives Us—By Faith Alone, 4.1-25**

Since righteousness is impossible for humans by works, Paul must show how we may achieve it. In this chapter Paul gives his proof that righteousness is by faith alone (4.1-8). Then he shows that this righteousness is available to both Jews and Gentiles (4.9-12). Verses 13—17a spell out implications of the truth given in 1-16: that the promise came to Abraham by faith, so that only by faith can anyone inherit. Finally, Paul illustrates justifying faith, in Abraham (4.17b-25).

▷ **A Series of Contrasts:**

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### **Proof that righteousness is by faith alone, 4.1-8**

Paul offers proof that righteousness is by faith, arguing from the Old Testament. He had said in 3.21 that the Law and the prophets gave testimony to righteousness by faith. Now he gives that evidence, citing Abraham's experience based on Genesis 15.6 and David's from psalm 32.1-2. God reckoned faith to Abraham as righteousness, and He does not keep record of sins to such people: He forgives them. Grace comes only to the ungodly. As a matter of fact, God only justifies ungodly believers (4-5)!

### **Faith righteousness is available to both Jew and Gentile, 4.9-12**

For Abraham this all happened before he was circumcised, a further proof that righteousness is not by law. But it happened then that God might also demonstrate that righteousness is available to both Jew and Gentile. Calling Abraham "father" of the faithful prepares for discussing the inheritance in the next paragraph.

**The implications, 4.13-17a**

**25**

The key implication of this great truth is that only by faith will anyone experience the great promise made to Abraham of inheriting the world. Law cannot grant the promise since it can only impose penalty on the law breaker (and all are law breakers!). Thus the promise given to Abraham, of seed and land (now the whole world), is fulfilled to him and all others by faith alone.

**Faith illustrated, 4.17b-25**

In the last verses of the chapter Paul finally defines the faith that is right relationship with God. Abraham's faith comes before us again, not solely for historical purposes. Paul records it as the great example of faith for all who follow Abraham, people who put their faith in One handed over because of our sins and raised because of our justification. This is the faith that is right relationship with God.

Abraham's faith, as all faith, has four elements: (1) knowledge, (2) assent, (3) love commitment, and (4) hope. Thus his faith (1) begins with knowledge of God's person and plan. For Abraham, the content of that knowledge is the creative power of God (v. 17b) and the promise to give a son (v. 18). These things Abraham (2) accepted as true in spite of massive problems facing him. He was almost one hundred years old, and his wife was 89 and barren.

However, "not being weak in faith" (v. 19) he believed the promise and not his circumstances (v. 18). In faith, then, Abraham (3) demonstrated that he had a love commitment to God by accepting the risk of approaching Sarah to conceive a son. (Remember that Sarah had not really believed God's promise in Gen. 18.) Abraham could take that risk (4) because of his

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confidence in God's promise, the hope (confident expectation) that "what God had promised, He was also able to do" (v. 21).

The last three verses (4.23-25) remind us that this material is not simply historical. God inspired this account as an example for all who would follow Abraham. Now we may know how to live before God and how to live with each other—by a faith relationship with God through Jesus, justified and forgiven, accepted in Christ.

▷ **What is Faith?**

### **Connection to the Argument of Romans**

Romans 4 plays a crucial role in the argument of the book. If right relationship with God is only by faith, all believers are fully accepted by God because of Christ. Law keeping cannot enhance our relationship with Him. Law breaking cannot detract from our relationship (remember 4.7-8!). Then, neither can we allow law to determine relationships with others in Christ. We must accept one another as Christ accepted us. If Christ accepts believing Gentiles, so must I. If He has accepted believing Jews, so must I. I must not impose more restrictions on fellowship than Jesus has!

## **The Life of Those Right with God by Faith, 5–8**

In Romans 1–8 Paul is arguing that “The just by faith shall live” (1.17). Chapters 1–4 have shown that righteousness is by faith alone. Now chapters 5–8 will describe the life of those who are right by faith. The section will develop in three large steps. Chapter 5 will show that our life is one of peace with God (5.1-11) and why (5.12- 21). In 5.20, however, a statement Paul makes raises all sorts of questions, questions that are asked and answered in 6.1–7.25, the second part of the section. Finally, Paul will return to the issue of peace with God, explaining the implications of suffering to our relationship with Him (8.1-39).

### **SECTION: A Life of Peace with God, Romans 5**

#### **A life of hope in affliction, hope of glory, and the love of God, 5.1-11**

Since God has declared us right with Himself, we have a life of peace with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. Because we are at peace three things are true. First, we boast in confidence of sharing in God’s glory (v. 2). Second we boast in afflictions because of the results that flow from them by the plan of God: perseverance, approved character, and hope, a golden chain for the Christian life (3-6). The hope that comes at the end of the chain finds its basis in the love of God (perhaps both our love for God enabled by the Holy Spirit, and God’s love for us assured to us by the Holy Spirit) so that we are confident about the future throughout our lives. It is this love that is the third reality that is ours because we are at peace with God.

The rest of 5.1-11 aims to expound this love. The greatness of this love, and its assured character (vv. 6-8) are clear from its objects. Christ died for the weak and ungodly, for sinners. Therefore we are confident that God will save us from wrath (both present wrath, 1.18-32, and future wrath, 2.1-11) since He has already justified us by means of Jesus' blood (5.9). Christ reconciled us, who were enemies, to God by His death so now He will surely save us by His life, and all the more assuredly now that we have received that reconciliation through the Lord Jesus Christ (5.10-11).

### **Reconciliation through Jesus, 5.12-21**

Paul has introduced the issue of reconciliation; now he will explain the basis of it. How can God reconcile weak, ungodly, sinful enemies? IT is, of course, through the work of Jesus.

However, he will trace reconciliation even more deeply. From the preceding section it is clear that reconciliation focuses on humanity as enemies of God. Paul explains in this passage how we became enemies. It is remarkable that our enemy-status does not root in our own sin: we sin instead because we are enemies of God. We became enemies, rather, because of Adam. Sin entered the human race through one man, Adam, in whose one sin we all sinned. We have become enemies in a representative. Therefore, we can be reconciled in a representative. Paul summarizes the discussion of vv. 12-17 in vv. 18-19. Through the transgression of one man condemnation has come to all; in the same way justification comes to all<sup>11</sup> in Christ's one act of righteousness. Thus,

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11 One might certainly support the doctrine of universal salvation from v. 18. However, the verse does not exist in a vacuum, but in the context of Romans. Therefore, v. 19 and chapter 2 must restrict the meaning of v. 18.

God has appointed all in Adam to the office of sinner; so also, He has appointed all in Christ to the office of righteous because of Jesus' one act of obedience.

Jewish Christian readers might wonder what role the law has in all this and why Paul has omitted it from his discussion of life with God and his exposition of reconciliation. He addresses that issue in 5.20-21. The law has a different purpose, to cause transgression to multiply. Three views have been offered of this last statement. The multiplication of transgression might mean that (a) people are now, through the law, more aware of what transgression is; (b) that sin now against the character of transgression, violation of the law; or (c) that there is an increase in the actual incidence of sinful transgression of the law. Given the language of the verse, only view (c) seems possible. The law does not and cannot aid in reconciliation since its task is to increase the actual incidence of sin. People with God's law actually sin more! Verse 21, then, adds the result for the whole discussion (not merely v. 20): As sin reigned in death, now grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

Verse 20 always causes consternation. Once people hear it, they stop listening and do not hear verse 21. It seems to imply that one need not obey in the Christian life. The questions posed by this verse appear in Romans 6 and 7.

▷ **How Did We Sin in Adam?**

▷ **Therefore?**

### **Connection to the Argument of Romans**

If all who are justified are at peace with God, then we will find it difficult to explain why we are not at peace with one another. This is especially so if Jesus reconciled us to God by His one act of obedience alone. If His one act of obedience has given us right relationship with god, then our dietary practices neither add to it nor detract from it. We must learn to accept all those whom Christ has received.

## A Parenthesis on Sin, Law, and Grace, Romans 6–7

Shall we sin that grace may abound? Paul must have faced this question frequently during his ministry. By affirming that grace superabounded where sin abounded, he appears to be implying that people should sin more in order to enjoy more grace. The statement in 5.20 lies at the root of the questions that follow in 6.1, 15; 7.7, and 13. These four questions mark out the structure of the chapters before us. The first question (6.1) finds its answer in 6.2-14. Then the statement in 6.14 arouses the question of 6.15 (Shall we sin because we are not under law?). The answer begins in 6.15 and continues through 7.6. In 7.5 Paul makes another statement, this time linking sin with the law, that raises the question of 7.7 (Is the law sin?). The answer occupies 7.7-12. Finally, after linking the law and death in 7.11, the final question comes in 7.13 (Did what was good become death for me?).

We have called this passage a parenthesis, following the lead of D. M. Lloyd-Jones.<sup>12</sup> If this view is correct, the main line of the argument will skip chapters 6 and 7 to be resumed again at 8.1. The course of Paul's discussion seems to go directly from 5.21 to 8.11, thus: "... in order that, as sin reigned in death, so also grace may reign by righteousness unto eternal life.... There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

The relation of this section to the argument of Romans should be clear. If law does not assist one to righteousness, then diet and calendrical restrictions can give one no special standing with God. The only issue of any importance is to concern oneself with assisting others to grow spiritually. One facet of such assistance will be to refrain from encouraging them to violate their consciences.

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<sup>12</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapters 7:1–8:4: The Law: Its Functions and Limits* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1973)

## We have died to sin and cannot continue in it, 6.1-14

After 5.20, the listener might (and often enough does) get the impression that being under grace entails sinning more to get more grace. Thus the question of 6.1. Paul's answer comes in four stages. First, he argues from baptism that we have died with Christ (vv. 2-3).<sup>13</sup> Second, he argues that as we have been joined in Christ's burial, we are also, like Him, raised to walk in newness of life (vv. 4-5). The results of this identification fill verses 6-11: we are no longer slaves of sin, as Christ is freed from sin, and must learn to think of ourselves as "dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus." The net effect in that we can<sup>14</sup> no longer live in sin. The fourth stage of this portion is in verses 12- 14 where Paul issues exhortations based on his teaching in the first eleven verses. Christians are in danger of allowing sin to reign in their bodies (he does not detail how yet, though what follows anticipates what he will say later). The danger comes from presenting our bodies to sin to accomplish its desires. The alternative is not to avoid sin, but to pursue righteousness (v. 13).<sup>15</sup> The reason for those exhortations is given in verse 14: Sin shall not be lord over you. We have authority that transcends the power of sin, the power of eternal life (5.21; 6.4). The last part of verse 14 explains further why sin shall not dominate us: we are not under law but under grace.<sup>16</sup> Paul's apparent point is that to be under law would entail being under sin's dominion. The question that follows assumes that being free from the law would mean being free to sin. Thus, the "objector," as in 6.1, misses Paul's point, assuming a contradictory position to that held by Paul.

To summarize, Paul answers the question of 6.1 by affirming that baptism teaches that we have died to sin and have been raised to walk in newness of life. Therefore we cannot continue in sin. We are no longer slaves to sin, since the body of sin has been rendered

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13 I understand baptism here as water baptism. Spirit baptism would not be a baptism into death but one into life, since by it we are joined in the Spirit to Christ's body (1 Cor. 12.13). Water baptism is a ritual of identification, in this case marking the baptized as united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

14 I am treating the deliberative future as expressing possibility.

15 The pursuit of righteousness is understood here in two senses. First, pursuing righteousness might mean seeking opportunities to be used by God, instead of simply avoiding sin. It is the positive replacing the negative. Second, and perhaps more importantly, pursuit of righteousness should be interpreted in light of the preceding context. That is, pursuit of righteousness occurs not by obedience, but by learning to live by grace.

16 The varieties of interpretation here are staggering. Only two options will appear here. Some would say that we are not under law's condemnation (e.g., Cranfield). Others would say that we are not under the law's "boundary markers" (e.g., Dunn), i.e., the dietary laws, sabbath, and circumcision.

powerless. We may live as Christ lives, dead to sin and alive to God. So we must learn to live in obedience to the truth (1 Peter 1.22), considering ourselves alive to God. This means, too, that we must pursue righteousness to prevent sin from reigning in our bodies, since we are not under law but under grace.

If we are not under law, one might guess then dietary and calendrical requirements can make no demand on us.

Neither can such demands place any burden on our fellowship in the church.

## We have died to sin and married another, 6.15–7.6

The question of 6.15 arises because of 6.14, Paul's assertion that we are not under law but under grace.

Therefore the question arises, "Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" The assumption behind the question is that law is the best protection against sin (contrary to Paul's statement in 6.14!). Therefore remove law sets us free to sin.

Paul's response begins in verse 16 and continues through 7.6. The base line for Paul appears in verse 16: one is a slave of whatever one obeys, whether sin with reference to death or of obedience with reference to righteousness.<sup>17</sup> With this base line established, Paul proceeds to apply the idea to his readers. Before coming to Christ they were slaves of sin and free from righteousness, receiving the outcome of their lives in death. Now that they have come to Christ, they are freed from sin and enslaved to righteousness. The condition issues in sanctification (6.16-22), since the wage of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (6.23).

In 7.1-6 Paul gives an illustration to explain his discussion. The law binds a woman to her husband. If she marries another while still married to her first husband, she is called an adulteress. If, though, her husband dies, she may remarry (7.1-3). In verses 4-6 he draws out the lesson. We have died to the law. That means that we may marry another, the resurrected Jesus, to bear fruit to God, the fruit of righteous living. Under the law, the passions of sin, aroused by the law, produced fruit for death. Now, however, we have been freed from the law by death to give our service in the fresh life of the Spirit, not in the obsolete way of the letter.

### ▷ Problems for Interpretation: 4 Views

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17 The Greek preposition *eis* is exceedingly idiomatic, occurring very frequently in the New Testament (1767 times, according to Accordance). Many translations read it here as expressing the result of obedience (cp. NASV, the Confraternity Version, and NEB). However, Paul has argued up to this point that obedience does not produce righteousness. So, while BDAG, s.v. *eis*, 290, lists Rom. 6.16 under the heading "the result of an action," I propose to read it in the category (p. 291) of "a marker of a specific point of reference, for, to, with respect to, with reference to."



**The law does its holy work of imposing present wrath on its subjects,  
7.7-12**

Verse 4 raised a possibility that Paul faces in verse 7: is the law sin? This Paul denies vigorously. Since the law's role is to inflict punishment (4:15), it is small wonder that the law imposes God's present wrath (cp. 1.18, 24, 26, 28) on those who place themselves under it. The law does not encourage sin; rather it punishes its subjects with more sin (cp. 6.14). Indwelling sin in our flesh (our desire for law righteousness) uses law to produce acts of sin; without the law indwelling sin cannot dominate us<sup>18</sup> (7.7-8, 10-11). As a Christian, Paul recognizes that he is "alive" (in terms of Roma. 6 this means that he is able to practice righteousness; cp. 6.4, 6, 11, 18). But returning to a law-way-of-life (when the law came), indwelling sin regained its power and robbed him of the ability to live righteously. The law, then, is not sin. It is doing its holy, just, and good task of punishing sin with God's present wrath.

**Indwelling sin continues to use law against us, 7.13-25**

The answer to the question in verse 7 now raises a new problem, the question that arises in verse 134. Since the law justly imposes death as a penalty, did what was good become death for me? Paul's answer comes in the rest of the chapter. On the contrary the function of the law is to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin (v.13). This shows that

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18 The "I" who speaks needs identification. For a full discussion of the history of the interpretation of this issue, see Jan Lambrecht, *The Wretched "I" and Its Liberation: Paul in Romans 7 and 8*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992. The understanding followed here is that Paul is speaking representatively, not excluding himself, but using himself as an example of what happens to any Christian who tries to live by the law.

the law is spiritual; it serves spiritual goals. However, I am fleshly, sold under sin. This statement, of course, is problematic. In what sense can Paul call himself “sold under sin” after chapter 6? The issue involved, it appears, is derived from 6.14 and the connection of thought that continues from 6.15 to 7.12. Paul, under law (when the commandment came, 7.9) is dead before the law, unable to practice righteousness.

The problem of these verses, with which Paul deals, is the problem of inability to do the righteousness that one longs to do. Thus, Paul delights in the law in his soul (7.22), but he cannot perform it. This is the idea that drives the identification, made in these notes, between flesh and law, that flesh is not our longing for sin. Flesh is, instead, our longing for righteousness, but for the wrong kind, for righteousness by the law. He finds indwelling sin too powerful for him, working when he longs for righteousness (7.15-16, 18-19). This proves that this kind of sin is not a product of Paul’s will but of sin that dwells in him (7.17, 20). He draws the conclusions in 7.23-25. Indwelling sin is at war with the longing of our minds for righteousness. This indwelling sin in our flesh takes us captive to sin and death by using God’s law! It is no marvel then the Paul cries in anguish, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body subject to such a death?” As a foretaste of chapter 8, he answers parenthetically, “Thanks to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Verse 25, finally, gives the grand conclusion (ara oun). With my mind I am a slave to God’s law (contrast 6.14!); with my flesh (that desires law righteousness but includes indwelling sin), I am a slave to the law of death (the law of God that justly imposes death as a penalty for sin).

▷ **Flesh**

▷ **Indwelling Sin**

## Relation to the Book's Argument

How then do these passages fit with the argument of the whole book? Chapters 6 and 7 address especially the “weak” in Rome. They are free to eat only vegetables and worship one day a week. If, though, they think that they are more acceptable to God, they make actually more trouble for themselves and are mortally wrong to judge their strong brothers. Pursuing righteousness by the law will only bring them under judgment. They will only find themselves unwillingly embroiled in sin, wretched men longing for deliverance from a body subject to such death.

## SECTION: Therefore, No Condemnation, 8.1-39

With chapter 8 Paul returns to the main line of his argument dropped at 5.21.<sup>19</sup> Chapters 6–7 are, however, anything but secondary since they have answered questions generated by his statement in 5.20 that the law caused transgression to multiply. Now, having answered those questions, he can pick up the thread of his discussion. In 5.21 he had indicated that grace now reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. From this, in 8.1, he draws the conclusion: There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

The eighth chapter has two large units. The first section, 8.1-17, draws out implications of chapters 6 and 7 in light of the peace with God introduced in chapter 5. One of the key verses of the passage is verse 15: For you have not received the spirit of bondage leading again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba, Father. The rest of the chapter returns to issues introduced in Romans 5, especially the role of suffering in the Christian life.

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<sup>19</sup> 19 There is a debate about the exact limits of the unit begun in chapter 7, whether it ends at 7.25, at 8.4, or at 8.11. The “diatribe” that Paul has pursued in chapters 6 and 7 appears to me to end in chapter 7. On the other hand, while the ideas of 8.1-4 or 8.1-11 continue to echo the concepts of the preceding two chapters, Paul seems to be making a new departure with his *ouden ara nun katakrima* of 8.1. One may hold, indeed, that 8.1-4, or 8.1-11, is a hinge passage linking the preceding with the following. Yet, he has returned now to the idea of peace with God for the justified introduced in 5.1, echoed by 8.1.

**Now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, 8.1-17**

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The passage before us has four paragraphs, 8.1-4, 5-8, 9-11, and 12-17. In them Paul draws out the reality of our peace with God, available only because we are not under law (i.e., in the flesh) but under grace (i.e., in the Spirit).

Verses 1-4 affirm that God has freed us from condemnation. Verses 5-9 contrast those who try to please God by the flesh with those who try to please Him by the Spirit. The third section, 8.9-11, assures the Romans that they are in the Spirit, with all the hope that implies. Finally, verses 12-17 spell out the implications of being in the Spirit, reconciled to God.

**God has freed us from condemnation, 8.1-4**

At last comes the great affirmation. There is no condemnation. The Holy Spirit who gives life in Christ has set us free from God's law that imposes sin and death as punishments. God has done this by doing what the law could not do. It could only expose and punish sin. God not only condemns sin in the flesh; He works so that now the demand of the law is fulfilled in the people of the Spirit (in believers) who refuse to live by the flesh (by the law).

### **Contrast of flesh and Spirit people, 8.5-8**

The contrast between flesh and Spirit people demands attention because of the situation at Rome. As the weak condemn their brothers for eating meat, they show that they are trying to live in the flesh. Now Paul shows that those in the flesh are hostile to God! They concern themselves with externals and are not in fact subject to the law of God, even being unable to subject themselves to it. They cannot please God. By contrast, Spirit people focus on the things of the Spirit, on life and peace. By implication, they alone please God.

### **Assurance for the Romans, 8.9-11**

Now Paul makes his point: the Romans are in the Spirit if they are indwelt by God's Spirit (without this, one does not belong to Christ!). Christ's presence means that we live because of righteousness, but not the law's. It is the righteousness of faith, by the Spirit. The grand future kept for such (even those who eat meat) is to be raised to new life by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead.

### **Three implications of being in the Spirit, 8.12-17**

So then, Paul says, the obligation is laid on us to live by the Spirit, not by the flesh. Living by the flesh brings death (in the context, death would still be inability to practice righteousness!). Putting the flesh to death occurs by the Spirit who leads us to live by faith under grace and grants ability to fulfill the law's righteous requirement (cp. 8.4). A second implication of being in the Spirit is that we have been given the attitude of sonship. The Spirit's work in this passage (vv. 15-16) is to implant in us this attitude of sonship so that we live as sons. There is still a third implication. We are joint heirs with Christ, heirs of all that Christ inherits, since we are children of God. All of this encourages us; but the end of verse 17 seems to rob us of the encouragement since it conditions all of these implications on suffering: "If (*eanper*, "enclitic particle, w. intensive and extensive force," BDAG, 798) we suffer with Him that we may be glorified with Him."

### **The role of suffering in Christian life, 8.18-39**

Paul returns to the problem of suffering here at the end of the section begun at chapter five. This is an essential discussion. If we are at peace with God, justified and reconciled (5.1-11), and if we are not under condemnation (8.1), why should we undergo suffering at all? What place does it have in the life of peace with God? The passage before us addresses these issues in four sections, 18-25, 26-27, 28-30, 31-36, and 37-39.

### **Our hope of glory makes suffering worthwhile, 8.18-25**

The future expectation of sharing God's glory (5.1-2) makes present suffering meaningful. Paul argues this point in this paragraph and the next by showing, indirectly, the glory that awaits us. There are, in fact, three evidences, two in the present paragraph and one in the next.

Verse 18 affirms the greatness of coming glory, completely out of proportion to present suffering. Then, the first evidence of its greatness appears in vv. 19-22, the groaning of creation. Creation itself longs for the glorious revelation of the children of God. Verse 23 gives the second evidence, our own groaning as we await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. This evidence he undergirds by reaffirming the role of hope in our salvation, vv. 24-25. Therefore, because of the hope, we can endure in confidence.

### **Our hope of glory is certified by the Spirit's intercession, 8.26-27**

Two groanings indicate the greatness of the future that awaits us. A third certifies that we will reach that hope. The Holy Spirit Himself groans unutterably as He intercedes for us. We would pray only to be released from suffering. By contrast, He prays in a godly way for the saints, in accord with the mind of God.

**Our suffering works good for us in God's eternal plan, 8.28-30**

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Because of the Spirit's intercession we may be certain that suffering accomplishes sanctification for us. He is praying in accord with God's eternal plan, begun in eternity past (in His foreknowledge and predestining), continued in our present (in His calling and justifying), and carried on into our future (in His glorifying work). Then all occasions of suffering are planned to produce the good in us, the likeness of Christ, so that Jesus will be glorified.

**God is for us; who is against us? 8.31-36**

The last three paragraphs demonstrate that God is for us. Then what can any enemy really do against us? What condemnation can ever befall us? What suffering can in any way indicate God's displeasure in us? He did not spare His own Son; He will surely bestow on us all other blessings in Him.

Suffering cannot condemn those whom God justifies and whom Jesus defends. Even the experience of Mosaic covenant curses (v. 35<sup>20</sup>) cannot separate us from the love of Christ (contrast and compare Ps. 44.22 quoted in Rom. 8.36).

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<sup>20</sup> For "tribulation" (*thlipsis*) or "distress" (*stenochoria*), see Deut. 28.53, 55, 57; for "persecution" (*diogmos*), see Lev. 26.17, 36; for "famine" (*limos*) or "nakedness" (*gumnotes*), see Deut. 28.48; "peril" does not occur in either passage; for "sword" (*machaira*), see Lev. 26.25, 33 (Deut. 32.25).

## We have complete victory through Christ Jesus our Lord, 8.37-39

Though the Christian life is full of planned suffering, it is a life of peace and reconciliation with God giving hope in the midst of suffering. Therefore Paul concludes the whole of chapters 5–8 with the affirmation of final certainty: nothing<sup>21</sup> will be able to separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### Relation to the Argument of the Book

Chapter eight is a climax in Romans. Being fully reconciled we are freed from the law and we are being prepared to experience and enjoy the glory of God. We have been relating the book to the conflict between the weak and strong in chapters 14 and 15. Chapter 8 directly addresses these issues. One might think that when the strong suffers, God is showing displeasure at their lifestyle. Verses 18-39 demonstrate that suffering can no longer be considered an invariable sign of the displeasure of God. Suffering is rather God's loving plan to bring all His people to Christlikeness. Further, the weak who concern themselves with diet and days are in a rather dangerous position. They are acting like people of the flesh who could, by setting their minds on the flesh, lose the ability to practice righteousness (8.1-17). It is only by putting the deeds of the body to death that they, and all in Christ, may live in the guidance of the Spirit, living by faith. By faith we experience the Spirit's assurance that we are God's children, coheirs with Christ, living in hope of the glory of God.

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21 “Nothing” here derives from the series of merisms given in 38 and 39a.

## **The Role of Israel in God's Plan, 9–11**

Bible students often treat Romans 9–11 as parenthetical to the book, even avoiding the chapters (especially 9) because of their difficulties. The chapters, however, fill a crucial role in the argument of the book. From almost the first words of the book, Paul has been focusing attention on the future. Jesus is One promised beforehand in the holy Scriptures. He is, in them, the promised king of David's line, crowned at the resurrection (1.2-4; cp. Acts 13.33).

The very verse Habakkuk 2.4, quoted in Romans 1.17, occurs in an eschatological context. It anticipates the coming judgment of Israel's enemies (Hab. 2–3). Chapters 5 and 8 have focused attention on eschatology by their emphasis on hope. Romans 9–11 will carry out that emphasis on the future by taking us all the way to the salvation of all Israel in chapter 11.

Of more immediate significance are two issues. First, with reference to the whole book, these chapters will address the presumptuous pride of both strong and weak. The strong, who have predominantly Gentile commitments, need the heavy emphasis, especially in chapter 11, on the hope of Israel, so that they will not despise their weaker brothers. The weak, who have primarily Jewish commitments, need to understand that their standing before God is entirely by grace. Their stronger brothers have equal standing before God, all by grace. Therefore the weak have no position from which they may condemn. They are all one in Christ by faith in Christ.

Second, statements Paul made in 8.33-39 necessitate this discussion. "Who will bring charges against God's elect?" (v. 33). Nothing "will be able to separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord" (v. 39). Yet, since chapter 2, Paul has argued that Israel, God's elect people, are under condemnation for their unbelieving violations of the law. If God's elect Israel can be condemned and separated from God's love, does this not call into question Paul's confidence in chapter 8? These questions become all the more important if even Gentile believers are children of Abraham. Chapters 9–11 will address these issues.

The unit of three chapters will address the role of Israel in the plan of God. Why have they not received Paul's gospel? Do they have any hope? Have the promises of God failed? Paul gives his answer in five steps. First, in 9.1- 29, he shows that God's electing work has always included some from Abraham's family and excluded others.

Second, he shows that Israel stumbled over the issue of faith, willfully rejecting God's righteousness to establish their

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own (9.30–10.21). The third step, 11.1-10, brings together the perspectives of the first two steps. God has not rejected His people. He is saving a remnant, as in all generations, but hardening the rest. Fourth, even the present failure of Israel serves the purpose of God. Their fall brings salvation to Gentiles. Therefore Gentiles must not boast against Israel (11.11-24). Finally, the salvation of the Gentiles will accomplish Israel's salvation (11.25-32). Verses 33-36 form a concluding doxology to the first major section of Romans (chapters 1–11).

▷ **The Five Step Argument:**

**Step One: God's Including and Excluding Election, 9.1-29**

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The section has five paragraphs, 1-5, 6-13, 14-18, 19-23, and 24-29.

**Acknowledging the problem, 9.1-5**

Paul's anguish over Israelite unbelief pours out in verses 1-3, longing for their salvation because of their great privileges, 4-5. The very privileges of Israel exacerbate his pain and longing.

**But God's Word has not failed, 9.6-13**

God's word cannot have failed since He has always intended to bless Abraham's seed. Yet, not every descendant of Abraham is his seed, even among Israel. God exercised distinguishing grace in Abraham's family from the beginning, since He chose Isaac not Ishmael, and Jacob not Esau. God made these choices to demonstrate His grace.

**The basic principle, 9.14-18**

These choices raise the question of God's justice (v. 14). Paul's response does not directly address that question until the next paragraph. Instead, he states a basic principle, quoting Exodus 33.19. God spoke this in the context of the golden calf incident at Mt. Sinai. Determined to judge wicked Israel, God said to Moses:

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“I will show mercy<sup>22</sup> to whom I will show mercy, and I will be compassionate to whom I will be compassionate.” God has the right to dispense of His mercy as He determines. All depends on God’s purpose to show mercy. The pharaoh of the exodus becomes a preeminent demonstration, and extension, of the principle. God exalted pharaoh to Egypt’s throne, not to receive mercy but to demonstrate God’s power so that His reputation would reach the nations.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Paul extends the basic principle in v. 18: “Therefore He shows mercy to whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.” It does not, indeed, depend on the will or effort of people, but on God who shows mercy.

### The question explored, 9.19-23

Now Paul returns to the question of v. 14, putting his words in the mouth of his objector. If such is true of God, then why does He still find fault, for who has resisted His will? The response, again, does not directly address the question. Paul directly addresses, rather, the objector. No one has the right to call God to account. Quoting from Isaiah now (29.16 and 45.9), oracles of judgment against an Israel who think themselves fully secure and in position to assess God’s understanding. With an allusion to Jeremiah 18.6, Paul reminds his objector that God deals with humanity as freely as a potter with his clay.<sup>24</sup> God’s purpose in human history is to show His wrathful

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22 The word translated “show mercy” is probably significant in the argument of Romans. The verb is eleeo, normally translated “to be merciful” or to “show mercy.” This statement, though, is translated from Hebrew, in which the original verb is chanan “to be gracious.” The Greek word group occurs first in Romans here and will be used only in chapters 9–11 (with one reference in 15.9). It may be that its use in this section is determined by this quotation. If so, it may be that eleos should be understood has being synonymous with charis in this context.

23 It is of some interest that this is the point of the use of eleos in Romans 15.9

24 The question inevitably arises here of the identity of the entity who has fitted the vessels of wrath for destruction. Two possibilities arise from the form of the participle katertismena. Since the form is ambiguous, one might read it as direct middle, with the result that the vessels “fitted themselves” for destruction. A second possibility is

power and the wealth of His grace (i.e., mercy, eleos). He must surely have that right. Can anyone justify withholding from Him that right with Israel?

### **He has preserved a remnant from Israel, 9.24-29**

The last paragraph of the unit now applies verses 19-23 to present Israel. In a series of quotations he shows that God has retained a remnant of Israel; by implication, though, each passage acknowledges God's judgment on the rest. It is here that Paul's wise ordering of ideas is most obvious. He has recalled the hardening of Pharaoh, a fact well familiar and acceptable to any Israelite. Now, he extends the same treatment to Israel. The reader will have difficulty accepting the one and rejecting the other.

### **Step II: Israel has rejected God's Righteousness, 9.50–10.21**

There are six paragraphs in this unit: 9.30-33; 10.1-4, 5-10, 11-13, 14-17, 18-21. Having shown that God works in both powerful wrath and grace throughout Israel's history, Paul will turn to show that that working is not arbitrary. Israel, indeed, has rejected God's righteousness, though clearly revealed.

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to read the participle as passive, rendering the interpretation that the vessels “were fitted [by someone else unspecified in the clause]” for destruction. The middle usage is relatively rare in the New Testament. Wallace comments: “In the NT, the direct middle is quite rare, used almost exclusively with certain verbs whose lexical nuance included a reflexive notion (such as putting on clothes), or in a set idiom that had become fixed in the language” (416). Therefore, one is almost driven to the passive. Then the question becomes, who did the fitting. The only resource for such identification is the context, and in the context, it is the potter, God, who makes from the same lump of clay one vessel for honor and another for dishonor.

## Introduction, 9.30-33

In the outworking of God's wrath and grace, the astonishing thing is that presently grace has come to Gentiles and wrath to Israel. Gentiles have obtained unsought righteousness while Israel failed even to achieve the righteousness of the law. Here we may see the close tie of this passage to chapters 1–8. It is this fact that necessitates the whole unit that we are in. The Gentiles, of course, obtained the righteousness of faith, while Israel sought righteousness by works. Thus they stumbled, for it is only "the one who trusts in Him that will not be ashamed."

## Israel's willfully ignorant zeal for God, 10.1-4

Paul longs for Israel's salvation, because, in part, of their zeal for God, uninformed as it is. Their failure of knowledge, however, is fatal. They have disregarded<sup>25</sup> the righteousness God gives in order to pursue their own. Thus they died not subject themselves to God's righteousness. The final explanation for their disregard is that they stumbled over Christ. He is the end<sup>26</sup> of the law regarding righteousness for everyone who believes. Thus, they did not subject themselves to God's righteousness. The final explanation for their disregard is that they stumbled over Christ. He is the end of the law regarding righteousness for everyone who believes.

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25 BDAG (12–13) proposes this translation.

26 Scholars debate the sense in which telos is used in 10.4. Cranfield argues that telos here must mean goal since Paul quotes the Old Testament as Scripture. He, therefore, does not believe that the Old Testament has ceased to have significance. However, BDAG (998) proposes to interpret the statement as affirming that Christ is both "the goal and the termination of the law at the same time, somewhat in the sense of Gal 3:24f". The argument of Romans seems to me to necessitate the meaning termination, even if the "goal" idea is present. Sometimes I suspect that we can make more distinctions and impose more precision on the text than the author (or Author) intended!

**Paul demonstrates again the difference in these two kinds of righteousness, 10.5-10**

Once again Paul gives his argument proving that righteousness is by faith. The reason is to press home in the context of Israelite unbelief the Old Testament nature of the teaching of faith-righteousness.

Now he quotes from Moses' own words, but this time to show the contrast between the two kinds of righteousness. First, he cites Leviticus 18.5 to show what righteousness by the law is: one lives by doing. But next Paul quotes Moses, from Deuteronomy, to prove that righteousness is by faith. He cites primarily from chapter 30 but introduces the quotations by citing a clause from Deuteronomy 9.4, "Do not say in your heart...." This clause is very important, for in it God warns Israel against attributing blessing to their own righteous acts (the noun is plural). The sixth verse of that chapter adds, "because you are a stiff-necked people." Then Paul turns to chapter 30 quoting freely from verses 11-14. There Moses says "This commandment ... is not too difficult for you ...." Kalland (Expositors Bible Commentary, "Deuteronomy," Accordance module) holds that "this commandment" is a collective referring to the whole legislation. "Obedience," he says, "is possible." Such a reading is a viable option, as in Deuteronomy 8.1 and 27.1. However the translators of the Septuagint may have sensed a different nuance in the three passages. In 8.1 and 27.1, they translated kol hammits wah as pasas tas entolas (perhaps kol has influenced this translation). In 30.11, though, they read he entole haute. It is possible, then, that the word should be read as a true singular. If so, the commandment that is not too difficult must be defined from the context. I propose that the commandment is given in verse 16, "in that I command you today to love the Lord your God." For Moses as for Paul, loving God (faith) leads to the fulfillment of the righteousness that the law requires (cp. Rom. 3.31; 8.4). this is certainly the way Paul interprets the passage, as Romans 10.8-9 make clear.

It is important to see, further, that verses 9 and 10 are not adding "lordship" to the conditions of salvation. One must remember that the passage is dealing with the problem of Jewish unbelief. Therefore, confession of Jesus as Lord is essential in the following sense. Every Jew knew God as Father (cp. Deut. 32.6). Every Jew understood God has Spirit (cp. Exod. 31.3). But that Jesus is God remains a stumbling block for them. Therefore, it is necessary, particularly for Jews, to confess that Jesus is Lord for salvation. That "Lord" has the sense of deity in verse 9, and not mastery, is supported by Romans 10.13, a quotation from Joel 2.32 (3.5 in Hebrew) where Lord translates YHWH—everyone who shall call

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on the name of YHWH shall be saved. Calling on a savior who is not YHWH yields no salvation.

### **Confirmation, 10.11-13**

Paul confirms the argument of verses 5-10 by two quotations. First, he again quotes Isaiah 28.16 (as earlier in 9.33, forming an inclusio for this part of his discussion), and second, Joel 2.32 (as discussed in the previous paragraph). The conclusion he draws is in the middle, verse 12: For there is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord of all is rich to all who call upon Him. After this paragraph, Paul returns to the main line of his discussion left off at 10.4.

**Perhaps Israel's ignorance is excusable, 10.14-17**

**53**

Since Israel is not saved (cp. 10.1), they have not called upon the Lord. Once must ask why. Perhaps they never heard the message (this is the force of the questions in verses 14-15, as is made clear in verse 16). If, then, Israel did not hear, their ignorance is excusable, since faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (here, not simply the Bible but the word proclaimed, rhema).

**Israel did hear the message constantly proclaimed by the prophets,  
10.18-21**

In verse 18 Paul states explicitly the question he is addressing: “But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did” (NIV). The menounge of verse 18 states a correction (BDAG, s.v. *ge*, 190), and that correction comes from the Old Testament, from Psalm 19, Deuteronomy 32 and Isaiah 65. In Psalm 19 he sees a parallel between the natural revelation and the proclamation to Israel (cp. E. F. Harrison, “Romans,” Expositors Bible Commentary, Accordance module). Israel cannot have escaped the message.

Verse 19 expostulates over this: “But again I ask, didn’t Israel understand?” He answers by a quotation from Isaiah 28.16. Perhaps the point of the reference is to draw attention to the foreign languages which under God’s wrath kept Israel from understanding (as at Pentecost). The *de* of verse 19 is fully adversative here. Isaiah corrects the whole: “I was found by those who did not seek me;” but to Israel: “All day long I held out my hands to a disobedient and refusing people.” Thus Israel’s ignorance was a willful and obstinate refusal of the message God proclaimed through all the prophets.

### **Step III: Summarizing Romans 9–10—God has preserved a remnant and hardened the rest, 11.1-10**

Then has God rejected His people? The remnant is proof that He has not, and Paul is proof that there is a remnant. Romans 11.1-10 will develop this idea in two paragraphs, 1-6 and 7-10.

#### **God has preserved a remnant, 11.1-6**

As in all of Israel's history, even in times of great apostasy (cp. 1 Kings 19.10, 14), God has preserved a remnant even now. Thus there is a remnant chosen by grace (excluding works by definition).

The rest of Israel has been hardened, 11.7-10. Israel as a whole did not achieve what they sought (in context this would be righteousness), but the remnant achieved it, while the rest were hardened. This hardening is not strange or unique. Isaiah 29.10 affirms that God had hardened Israel in the past. David prays in Psalm 69.22-23 against some in his day that God would judge them (all the more important in this reference since David was also a messiah).

**Step IV: God gave the blessing to Gentiles or order to make Israel jealous, 11.11-24**

**55**

The fourth set in addressing the issues raised by the gospel comes in Romans 11.11-24. Unfortunately for an attempt at brief exposition this passage contains significant difficulties, but it develops through three paragraphs, verses 11-16, 17-21, and 22-24. In this unit Paul will show that Gentiles participate in the Abrahamic promise by faith because of Israel's failure. But this is not the end of the story. Israel's fall meant life for the Gentiles, so their acceptance will mean even greater wealth for the whole world (11.11-15). Even in rejection, though, Israel remains holy before God. Therefore the Gentiles must not despise Israel, the natural heirs who will be restored to their privileges (11.16-21). Gentiles must remember that they stand by faith only. God will surely restore Israel by faith (11.22-24).

**Israel's fall and restoration mean blessing for the world, 11.11-16**

With the ominous quotation in verses 8-10 still in our minds, we must ask the question that Paul asks: did they stumble irrevocably? His answer is a resolute no. Then he explains in 11b-15. Their failure brought salvation to the Gentiles. Even in this God has His purpose for Israel, aiming to stir up jealousy in Israel. He anticipates the point of Step V (11.25-32) by alluding to the restoration of Israel. Their failure has brought salvation to the Gentiles. Then their acceptance will mean life from the dead.

Verses 13 and 14 are a parenthetical section, but they also anticipate the emphasis of the next paragraph where Paul will address Gentile pride against Israel.

## Holy Israel must not receive Gentile scorn, 11.17-21

Paul recognizes a danger from what he is teaching: Gentile scorn for Israel. In fact, that danger appears to be already present in the Roman churches. As we learn in chapter 14, those who eat meat treat those who do not with disdain. While the “strong” and “weak” are not merely ethnic distinctions, they almost certainly are related to Jewish and Gentile concerns. This passage in Romans 11, then, will lay the foundation for the respect Paul will call for from Gentile Christians for Israel, even for unbelieving Israel.

Two issues greatly complicate this passage: the identity of the olive tree, and the identity of the branches. Some have held that the olive tree is Israel. Of those who hold this view some distinguish between Israel, the true people of God (including Gentiles in the church) and Jews, the people rejected by God. This distinction is inappropriate to the context of Romans 11. In verse 2 Israel is certainly not the believing remnant enjoying the blessing of God, and in verse 26, Israel is a people who will be saved when the deliverer comes to turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Another interpretation, much better, is that the olive tree is Abraham. Romans 4.11-12 might be called to support the view. My only hesitation in accepting it is related to my understanding of the identity of the branches. To be “in Abraham,” in the sense suggested by 4.11-12, requires the notion that the branches are believers. In that case we have a situation in which believers are removed from their saved condition because of unbelief. If they are believers (see again 4.11-12), how are they unbelievers? Further the impression I have from the study of Romans is that no genuine believer can lose his status of right relationship with God.<sup>27</sup> This leads me to a third view of the olive tree.

The interpretation I propose takes account of a peculiarity of this text not observable in English. As Paul has been addressing his Gentile readers, since verse 13, he has referred to them in the plural (humin). At verse 17, however, a change occurs. He refers to his addressee in the singular (su) and continues in the singular throughout the paragraph. At verse 25, though, he returns to the plural (humas).

The singular pronoun is significant, certainly. The nature of that significance is debatable, but I offer this interpretation. Paul refers not to individual Gentiles, either by the branches or by the

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<sup>27</sup> As a basic commitment, hermeneutically, one should not use an obscure passage to interpret and establish doctrine, especially when clearer passages have already given direction to one’s thinking. Whatever, therefore, the olive tree passage is about, one should use clearer passages to establish its meaning rather than using it to reinterpret clearer passages.

pronoun. Rather, he refers to the Gentile world. The Gentile world is now placed into the relation that the Jewish world was once in; but what was that relation? All Israelites in the Old Testament era, by being Israelites, were potential heirs of the Abrahamic promise, (cp. Rom. 4.13). Merely being born in Israel made one a potential heir, but three things might mean being disinherited. If an Israelite male remained uncircumcised, he would be “cut off from his people” (Gen. 17.14).

Second, if an Israelite committed certain sins, stipulated in the law of Moses, that person would be “cut off from his people” (e.g., Exod. 30.33, for making holy oil for common use!). third, in light of Romans 4.9-13 and Deuteronomy 10.16, unbelief (the violation of the meaning of circumcision) would prohibit one from inheriting the Abrahamic promises. This position, then, of being potential heirs defines best the meaning of being “the branches from the wild olive tree,” and the cultivated olive is the Abrahamic covenant or promise. The Gentile world is now placed in the position of inheriting the promise to Abraham if it continues to stand in faith (11.20-21). In accord with God’s treatment of the Jewish world in the past, God is now taking only a remnant from the Gentiles. The rest are being hardened. Like the Jewish world of Paul’s day, though, a time will come when Gentiles, as a people, will respond collectively in unbelief. Then they will be cut out of the tree and the Jewish world will be grafted in again, renewed to the status of heirs of the Abrahamic promise (11.22-24).

#### ▷ **What is the Olive Tree?**

#### ▷ **What is Grafted In?**

## Step V: Gentile salvation will accomplish Israel, 11.25-32

Paul now reaches the climax of chapters 9–11. If the issue that precipitated this passage is the trustworthiness of God, if God’s elect Israel can be condemned and separated from God’s love, does this not call into question Paul’s confidence expressed in 8.31-39? Now he will show that God’s calling is irrevocable, that “all Israel will be saved.” Two units may be discerned in this section. Verses 25-27 affirm the coming salvation of Israel, and verses 28-32 summarize the whole argument of Romans 9–11.

### All Israel will be saved, 11.25-27

As before, Paul is concerned to deflate Gentile pride,<sup>28</sup> so he reveals the mystery of Israel’s condition. A partial hardening besets them until the full complement of Gentiles comes in. Thus (both “in this way” and “at such a time” as the preceding *achri hou* makes clear) all Israel will be saved. If one associates this event with the tribulation, it is likely that God will then purify Israel so that only believers will remain. In this view, all Israel would refer to the whole surviving generation. For the first time, the remnant and the nation will be coterminous. Paul confirms his word by Scripture, from Isaiah 59.20-21 and 27.9. Both occur in salvation oracles for Israel and anticipate a time when God’s redeemer will take away Jacob’s ungodliness in a covenant that will forgive their sins.

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28 For the meaning of “mystery” see Romans 16.25-26: “the mystery kept silent in ancient times, but now made known through the prophetic Scriptures” (cp. also Col. 1.26).

### **Concluding summary, 11.28-32**

**59**

The current rejection of Israel has come for the sake of the Gentiles' salvation.

In the future they will obtain salvation. God has shut up everyone under sin so that He might show grace to Israel and Gentiles alike. When "all Israel" comes to salvation, God will complete His plan, begun at creation, to bless all the human race. The promise to Abraham, "in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed," will finally be fulfilled. With the salvation of Israel, all the nations will be saved. God had shut up everyone under unbelief so that He might show grace to all alike. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.

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### **Doxology, 11.33-36**

Paul explodes in poetic praise. God's unsearchable wisdom has formed this great and shocking plan to save Israel and Gentiles when the sin of both so greatly obstructed the purpose of God. No one else could have counseled Him or assisted in such a plan. Therefore all things find their source in God; all things are carried out by God's providence; and all things occur for His glory.

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## The Application of Righteousness by Faith, 12.1–15.13

Chapters 1–11 have sufficiently treated the saving plan and work of God. Paul’ thesis, that the just by faith shall live, stands as the truth taught by the law, the prophets, and now the apostles. It remains only to show the implications for the church at Rome. These implications appear in 12.1–15.13.

The application of the book falls into three large parts. An introduction appears in 12.1-2. Then Paul will call his faith-righteous people to: a) serve one another by spiritual gifting (12.3-8), b) love one another genuinely, especially rejecting vengeance (12.9–13.10) since salvation is so near (13.11-14), and c) receive one another as Christ has received us, for the glory of God (14.1–15.13).

The interpretation of Romans offered in these notes may raise a question regarding this section of the book. If Christians are not under law, and if law actually exacerbates sin, why does Paul give so many commandments?

Would not these commandments have the same effects in the lives of the Romans that the law has? These are not idle questions. The answer, though, is rather simple. First, one should realize that commandment and law are not identical, as we argued earlier. Law, including the Mosaic Law, requires obedience and offers reward earned by keeping it (see Rom. 10.5). Second, law imposes penalty. Yet, in the New Covenant “there is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” Violation of these commandments brings no penalty. We experience discipline, but discipline, according to Hebrews 12:4-11, is not for discipline: it is for all sons. This is a distinction that Christians rarely make and so needs some discussion. Penalty, in its extreme form, entails the death of the violator. Therefore, just penalty does not concern itself with the welfare of the sinner, only with the satisfaction of justice. Discipline, by contrast, fundamentally pursues the good of the sinner.

Hebrews 12 identifies this function of discipline when we read, “He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.”

Additionally, penalty is motivated by wrath (cp. Rom. 4.15). Discipline is motivated by love. Again, we may turn to Hebrews 12.6: “those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.” In this connection, we often say, as well, that sin breaks fellowship with God. In light of Hebrews 12, it would seem that we do not lose fellowship with God (a phrase never found in Scripture), but we gain it. Indeed, to be without discipline means that we are treated as outsiders to the family. Discipline means that we are treated as sons, receiving the Father’s love.

Finally, discipline, for the Christian, does not come primarily for disobedience, though surely God disciplines us, when appropriate, for our sins. Hebrews 12 affirms that God disciplines us not because of our sin but because we are His sons.

One other issue must be addressed in discussing the differences between law and the instructions in Romans 12–15. Law addresses issues required of its subjects. These commandments also address what is required, but also what the Holy Spirit will be enabling the believer to do. In this respect, one may say that the commandments of the New Testament are not law at all. They indicate to us where the Holy Spirit will be active in our lives, so that we may cooperate with His work. Thus we will not be at cross purposes with Him, but collaborate with Him in the work of sanctification. Indeed, our cooperation will be our faith response to these commandments. Thus, faith will issue in obedience, and the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

### Introduction, 12.1-2

The apostle to the Gentiles has the authority to command what is right. Yet, with all his authority, he urges (*parakalo*, cp. Phile. 8-9) his readers toward the style of life fitting for the “mercies of God.”<sup>29</sup> As Paul says “therefore” and “by the mercies of God,” he summarizes all that he has said in Romans 1–11. All that he has said leads reasonably to the basic exhortation of verses 1 and 2. That basic exhortation is to offer our bodies as sacrifices. Yet he calls not

<sup>29</sup> This word “mercies” is not the word that appeared in Romans 9–11. There the word was *eleos* and its cognates. Now the word is *oiktirmos*, so I have read it not as “grace” under the influence of the quotation from Exodus, but according to its natural Greek sense.

for death. These sacrifices will be more costly than animal offerings. They will be living, holy, and acceptable, reasonable service in light of God's merciful acts.

That they are living sacrifices implies that the sacrifice will be offered over and over again in daily service. That they are holy means that they are set apart to the service and worship of God and must share in and reveal the character of God (in the context, revealing and practicing grace). As such, then, the sacrifices will be well pleasing to God.

Even Christians, though, are not fully prepared to offer themselves in this way. Thus, Paul urges them on to full capacity for service by the “renewal of your minds” (v. 2). It sadly remains possible for Christians to be fashioned in the mold of this world. Consequently he urges his readers to submit to transformation. This transformation will proceed by “renewing the mind,” and its result will be demonstrating the quality of the will of God. Renewal of the mind is necessary, in the context of Romans, because of the attitudes the Roman Christians have been displaying.

They can despise and condemn one another. But such attitudes prohibit serving one another in living sacrifice. Therefore, they need to learn the truths of chapters 1–11 to renew their minds.

As the sacrifices have three attributes (living, holy, and acceptable), so God's will has three attributes. The will of God is good. Earlier Paul showed that the law of God was good, but in a different sense (7.7-12). We argued there that goodness meant the revelation of present wrath against the law breaker. The will of God is good here in the sense that its effects grow out of God's mercies and reflect them. It will produce good for the church. The will of God is acceptable. Sacrifice, to be acceptable to God must be holy. The will of God, though, is probably acceptable to man! Those who live out the will of God will bring a welcome service to fellow Christians, bringing them life and peace in Christ. As the will of God forms our lives, what we do in our sacrificial service will bring pleasure to ourselves and others,<sup>30</sup> bringing spiritual health to its recipients and unity to the church. Finally, the will of God, carried out in transformation by renewal, is complete. It is not entirely clear what “perfect” or “complete” means here. The word may mean “complete” or “mature.” Here it may mean complete in covering all that is needful. Paul will explore this complete will of God, this living, holy, and pleasing sacrifice of our bodies, in 12.3–15.13.

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<sup>30</sup> This interpretation appears to violate the normal usage of the word *euarestos*, but it fits the context of Romans 12.

**Living Sacrifice: Serving one another in spiritual gifting, 12.3-8**

**63**

The first way of offering living sacrifice to God<sup>31</sup> is by serving one another by spiritual gifting. Gifting is clearly the subject of the passage as verses 4-8 show. However, verse three does not immediately suggest the gifts. One proposal to integrate verse 3 is to see its contribution in light of the whole message of the book. The Romans are people who despise and condemn one another. Such attitudes are only possible for those who think more highly of themselves than they ought. This overvaluation would also have kept them from serving one another. The unity of the Body exists though the diversity of the gifts. The diversity of the gifts fosters that unity. To withhold ministry from the Body is to think too highly of oneself. Thus, living sacrifice will serve by faith as God enables, either by serving, or teaching, or exhorting, or sharing liberally, or managing, or joyfully showing mercy. One cannot serve brothers and sisters in Christ when condemnation and disrespect are present.

**Section: Living Sacrifice: Loving one another genuinely, 12.9–13.10**

The second way of offering living sacrifice to God is by loving one another genuinely. The first instruction in verse 9 is probably the statement of theme for the section. Paul returns overtly to love in 13.8-10 forming an inclusio with 12.9. The inclusio, then, sets the theme. The various exhortations in the passage should be understood as defining in what way Paul intends love to operate.

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<sup>31</sup> The *gar* of verse 3 needs some explanation. BDAG explains *gar* as having three senses: cause or reason, clarification, or inference. Here I understand it as marking clarification, perhaps signifying little more than *de* as a continuative particle.

64

The structure of the passage is relatively clear, having five divisions. The first, 12.9-13, includes apparently miscellaneous instructions, but organized in alternating groups of two and three. Second, 12.14-16 addresses the attitudes of unity that he seeks in Rome (cp. 15.4-5). Third and fourth, 12.17-21 and 13.1-7, together, address the issue of vengeance, reserved for God (12.17-21) and delegated to human government (13.1-7). Fifth, 13.8-10 returns explicitly to love which is the fulfillment of the law.

### **The manifold expressions of love, 12.9-13**

The instructions of these verses unpack what Paul means by love. In the NA28 the editors have punctuated the first commandment, let love be genuine, with a period. By this means they have set it apart from what follows. This indicates their sense that it summarizes the whole section, or at least the immediately following commandments.

Following this is a series of grouped instructions, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2. The first grouping, of two, links good and evil. A group of three comes in 10 and 11a. Each member of the group is led by a dative feminine article, with brotherly love, honor, and zeal. Next comes a group of two, with the article τῷ associated with the instructions to be fervent in spirit and serving the Lord. Again a group of three follows, with the feminine article (with hope, affection, and prayer). Finally, a last group of two, using feminine articles (with needs and hospitality). If we love properly, we cannot despise our sisters or brothers in Christ, nor can we condemn them.

**The attitudes of unity, 12.14-16**

**65**

Paul calls his readers to loving treatment of others. He commands them to bless persecutors. Then he calls on them to share in the joys and sorrows of others, always seeking a harmonious attitude, forswearing arrogance to accommodate themselves to humble people. Genuine love must be humble.

**SECTION: Vengeance is reserved to God and is delegated by Him to government, 12.17–13.7**

**Vengeance is reserved to God, 12.17–21**

Genuine love is incompatible with vengeance (and with disrespect and condemnation). Therefore Paul counsels his people to provide, rather, things good in the sight of all people and to seek peace. Instead of avenging themselves, they are to entrust vengeance to God, since He reserves it for Himself (Deut. 32.35). To replace vengeance, God's people are to do good to those whom harm them.

### **Vengeance for evil is delegated to government, 13.1-7**

Additionally God has delegated authority to government to punish evil. Therefore, all God's people must submit to government, as to ministers of God for good. This is why we pay taxes. Thus we must render what is due to each, tax, toll, reference, and honor.

### **Love, the fulfillment of the law, 13.8-10**

Paul commands his readers to avoid on-going debt<sup>32</sup>, except the one debt of loving one another, because loving another fulfills the law (now he finishes his treatment of fulfilling the law begun in 3.31, and discussed in chapters 6–8). All of the commandments (and thus, also, the commandments in this whole section) are fulfilled in the one commandment, love your neighbor as yourself.

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32 The prohibition of verse 8 is not absolute. The verb is in the present tense which almost certainly implies being continually in debt. The aorist prohibitive subjunctive would be necessary to ban all debt. The previous verse indicates that we do owe taxes, tolls, honors, and reverence, debts of many kinds. Ongoing debt, that we cannot pay off, is prohibited here, except the debt to love one another.

**Parenthesis: Salvation is near, 13.11-14**

These instructions are all the more important because of the time, since the Lord's coming is near, the time of our salvation. The apostle counsels us to prepare ourselves for our labors, with the instruments of light, to live in the light, putting on the Lord Jesus, making no provision for our flesh (see the discussion of chapter 7).

**Section: Living Sacrifice: Accepting those who differ over Christian life practices, 14.1–15.13**

We come now to the capstone of Paul's argument. If our reading of Romans has been accurate, everything in the book aims toward this section. Since we have discussed it already, it remains only to trace Paul's thought. One definition needs review, though, in this preface to the discussion. Paul is taking up Christian liberty in this passage, as he does also in 1 Corinthians 8–10. In both passages, Christian liberty refers to our liberty to limit our behavior as much as is necessary to help others grow spiritually. Any other view of Christian liberty really leads to the violation of the teaching of the two passages. The larger unit appears to have four major subunits. In 14.1–3 Paul introduces the issues to be discussed. Then in 14.4–12 he instructs the weak, and in 14.13–15.6 he instructs the strong. Finally, there is a conclusion in 15.7–13.

### Introducing the issue, 14.1-3

This first subsection, 14.1-3, introduces the issue to be discussed, namely the relations between the weak and the strong. Verse one states the basic principle of acceptance. The verse contains a difficulty of translation, and of interpretation, in its last clause. The NASV reads, “not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions,” while NIV reads, “without passing judgment on disputable matters.” Other translations (NAB, RSV, KJV) leave the translation ambiguous. The issue involved in this section is not passing judgment on the opinions of the weak. Therefore, I opt for the reading of the NIV.

The strong eat anything, but the weak eat only vegetables. This has led the Roman Christians to despise and condemn one another. Both groups err in their treatment of each other, because God has accepted both! The expression “doubtful things” of this passage refers, as the context shows, to matters that are not addressed in commandments or prohibitions from God. Thus, diet and calendar matters are matters of conscience, not of law for the Christian. Paul does not address here the issue of disobedience to commandments, only of “doubtful things.”

**The weak must learn not to judge the Lord’s servants since He has already accepted them and will show their acceptance when they stand before Him (14.4-9)**

In a fairly severe tone, Paul addresses the weak warning them against judging someone else’s servant. They demonstrate that they think too highly of themselves by their attitude of condemnation. The true Master will make His servants stand in the judgment. Anyone who condemns one whom the Master has approved will

put himself in the wrong. Any issue that comes up, then, whether food or daily worship must be submitted to the Lord. What one of His servants does in full faith is acceptable to Him and approved for our practice. However, one does not live to oneself or die to oneself. We belong to God because of the redeeming virtue in the work of Jesus.

**Since everyone will give account of his own life before Christ, it is wrong to judge or despise one's brother (14.10-12)**

Therefore, Paul poses sharply the questions, “Who are you to condemn your brother?” In this paragraph, though, Paul is preparing for the transition to the next subunit. So, he follows with the parallel question, addressed to the strong: “Or indeed you, why do you despise your brother?” Since all judgment belongs to God, as all vengeance belongs to God, we must live as those who will appear before God’s judgment seat, each giving an account of himself to God.

**The strong who are righteous by faith must determine not to cause the weaker brother to violate his conscience (14.13)**

Again in a transition, Paul moves from the weak to the strong. The first exhortation in the verse addresses the weak, but he adds the exhortation to the strong, to determine not to place a stumbling block in the way of a brother. In the context, a stumbling block or cause of offence will be a temptation to violate one's conscience.

**Since the real issues of the kingdom are righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love for your brother do not harm him by your freedom (14.14-18)**

When dealing with “doubtful things,” nothing is common in itself. Paul does not deny that there are things that are unclean. Rather, nothing about which Scripture is silent, as it is so frequently under the New Covenant, is unclean. Two issues present themselves in this paragraph. One, positively, is to remind the strong that the kingdom of God is not taken up with issues of food and drink, but with righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Thus, one should take care to practice one's liberty so that God is praised by one's behavior. The other issue is the damage that one can do to the weaker brother. In this paragraph and in the next Paul warns that improper use of liberty may “destroy” (*apollumi*<sup>33</sup> in v. 15 and *kataluo*<sup>34</sup> in v. 20) one for whom Christ died, one who is the work of God. It is not clear from the context of Romans what precisely Paul

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33 So strong is this word that BDAG associates it in this passage with “eternal ruin” (115).

34 Again a strong word that BDAG describes in this way: “ear down the work (i.e. the Christian congregation which, because of vs. 19, is prob. thought of as a building of God) Ro 14:20” (522).

has in mind as he uses this language. What is clear is that serious damage may result to the weak by a stronger brother misusing his liberty.

**Therefore then pursue things that produce peace, refusing to lead your brother to violate his conscience by acting in unbelief (14.19-23)**

The goal of Christian liberty is to provide peace for each other, what will build others up. Not all that offend people's consciences is wrong; but it is wrong to lead others to violate their consciences.

Therefore, when one has liberty before God, one must learn to keep that to oneself before God. Doubt in these debatable matters is a key issue, because whatever is not of faith is sin.

**We who are strong ought it our freedom for the sake of the weak,  
following the example of Christ (15.1-4)**

The strong must learn to live like Jesus who did not please Himself but bore reproach. Liberty does not allow us simply to please ourselves. The message about Jesus was written so that through it we may learn endurance and encouragement and thus have hope.

**Closing Prayer: Now may the God of patience and comfort grant unity  
so that you may unitedly glorify the God and Father of our Lord  
Jesus Christ (15.5-6)**

The emphasis on unity here is noteworthy in a book so heavily dominated by the teaching of grace. Where legalism rules, unity is impossible except in uniformity. Only under grace may we have diversity in the grey areas of Christian life matters.

### **Conclusion of the application, 15.7-13**

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Thus Paul comes to his conclusion: “Wherefore receive<sup>35</sup> one another as Christ received you for the glory of God” (15.7). Receiving one another expresses socially the work of Christ who came as the minister of both the circumcision and the uncircumcision (vv. 8-9a) and even the grand purpose of God that the Gentiles would join in glorifying God (9b-12; citing Ps. 18.50; Deut. 32.43; Ps. 117.1; and Isa. 11.10).

Paul closes the main body of his letter with another prayer: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the Holy Spirit’s power” (15.13).

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### **Epistolary Conclusion, 15.14–16.27**

**A. I am persuaded that you are capable of doing, and helping<sup>36</sup> each other to carry out, acceptance each other by grace (15.14).**

**B. I have written boldly to you to call you to grace, because I myself minister under grace by His power so that the Gentiles will be my offering to God sanctified by the Holy Spirit (15.15-21).**

- My aim in writing so boldly to you is to deal with you by grace so that you, as the offering I make in my ministry

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35 For the sense of the verb *proslambano*, see Psalm 27.10 and Phile. 17.

36 The verb is *vouvētēō* — “In the case of διδάσκειν the primary effect is on the intellect,

to God, will be well pleasing, sanctified in the Holy Spirit (15.15-16).

- Indeed I only boast about what Christ has done through me in my ministry from Jerusalem all the way round to Illyricum (15.17-19).
- Thus I have intended to preach only where Christ is unknown in harmony with the Word of God through Isaiah (15.20-21; quoting Isaiah 52.15).

### **C. I will come through Rome on my way to Spain after completing the ministry of the Greek saints to the poor at Jerusalem (15.22-29)**

- For this reason I have not yet come to you, but now having opportunity I am passing on my way to Spain through Rome and hope for your help on the trip (15.22-24).
- But for the present I am going to complete the ministry of the Greek saints, growing out of their sense of indebtedness to the poor at Jerusalem, and then I will come to you on my way to Spain with Christ's blessing (15.25-29).  
But for the present I am going to Jerusalem ministering to the saints (15.25).  
For the Macedonians and Achaians wanted to give some help to the poor saints in Jerusalem, since they are debtors, having received spiritual benefit from them, to meet their spiritual needs (15.26-27).  
When I have made sure that their ministry is fulfilled, I will travel by you to Spain with the full blessing of Christ.(15.28-29).

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and someone qualified exercises the influence. *vouθετεῖν*, however, describes an effect on the will and disposition, and it presupposes an opposition which has to be overcome. It seeks to correct the mind, to put right what is wrong, to improve the spiritual attitude" (TDNT, s.v. *vouθετέω*, by Johannes Behm, 4[1967]: 1019). Behm quotes Debrunner in a footnote on the same page: "διδάσκω means 'to show how,' *vouθετεῖν* 'to show what is wrong....'" It is a form of "pedagogical discipline. It does not mean 'to punish,' but through the word (Xenoph. Mem., I, 2,21: *vouθέτικοι λόγοι*) to cause the appeal to the moral consciousness to gain a hold over men and bring them to repentance and shame, so that punishment is superfluous" (TDNT, 4:1020).

**D. Please pray earnestly for my deliverance from the unbelievers in Judea, for the reception of this ministry among the saints, and for a joyous trip to be with you (15.30-32).**

**E. May the God of peace be with you all (15.33).**

**Commendation and Greetings (16).**

**A. I commend to you Phoebe, a true servant of Christ's Church, because she is coming to Rome, and ask you to help her in her business(16.1-2).**

**B. Please greet the following brothers and sisters in the Church in a way that befits the saints(16.3-16).**

Greet the following (16.3-15). \* *The following bolded names were common slave names in the first century.*

- Prisca and Aquila and the church in their house (16.3-4)
- Epainetos (16.5)
- Maria (16.6)
- Andronicus and Junias (16.7)
- **Ampliatus** (16.8)
- **Urbanus** and **Stachys** (16.9)
- Apelles, and those of the household of Aristobulus (16.10)
- Herodian (16.11a) — Perhaps a relative of Herod.
- those of the household of Narcissus (16.11b)
- Tryphaina and Tryphosa (16.12a)
- **Persis** (16.12b)
- Rufus and his mother (16.13) — This may be the Rufus Mark mentions in Mark 15.21, and therefore the son of Simon of Cyrene.

- **Asyngcritos, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas,** and the brothers who are with them (16.14)
- **Philologos** and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas and the saints who are with them (16.15)

Greet them in a way that befits the saints (16.16a).

All the churches of Christ greet you (16.16b).

**C. Avoid those who violate this teaching since you have a good testimony, and trust in God who will by grace quickly trample Satan under your feet (16.17-20).**

- I urge you to watch out for those who violate my teaching and steer clear of them for they are not serving Christ, but their own bellies and deceive the unwary (16.17-18).
- For your obedience is well known, for which I rejoice, so I want you to be wise for the good, but untutored in evil (16.19).
- The God of peace will trample Satan under your feet quickly; may the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you (16.20).

**D. I send you greetings from Timothy, Luke, Jason, Sosipater, Tertius, Gaius, Erastus, and Quartus (16.21- 23).**

**E. To Him who will establish you by the grace of Christ in accord with His newly revealed mystery, bringing the Gentiles to faith, the only wise God, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever, amen (16.25-27).**

## Recommended Reading

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