

Epistle to the Romans

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(1998 and 1979 Studies)

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1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original studies did not follow a prepared text but were extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the studies, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

(Studies led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1998 and 1979)

To whom did the Apostle Paul address his Epistle to the Romans? Was it addressed to Jewish Christians who resided in Rome, to Gentile converts who were meeting together in Rome, or to all Christians who lived in Rome? As verse 7 indicates, the epistle was addressed to “all [Christians, both Jews and Gentiles] that be in Rome.” With the Jews being a mercantile or business people, a number lived in the capital of the empire, that is, until the persecution of Nero, which resulted in their dispersion mostly into Asia Minor. Priscilla and Aquila, who were among the Jews affected by Nero’s decree, went from Corinth to Ephesus, where they evidently stayed.

Before beginning the study of this epistle, we would like to know when it was written, where it was written, and by whom it was delivered. Paul dictated the letter in Greek to Tertius around the year AD 60, which was fairly late in the apostle’s ministry. “I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord” (Rom. 16:22). At the time, Tertius was in Cenchrea, which was a port city in Corinth.

Paul wrote to the brethren at Rome, “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, ... [who] is a servant of the church ... at Cenchrea; That ye receive her in the Lord, ... and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also” (Rom. 16:1,2). The Epistle to the Romans was given to this sister, who lived in Cenchrea, to take to Rome.

Paul was temporarily residing at the home of a man named Gaius in Cenchrea, Corinth, when Tertius wrote down the apostle’s words about AD 60. Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, an official in high places, was impressed with Paul’s teaching (Rom. 16:23).

Paul’s Epistle to the Romans was not the first letter he wrote. Why, then, does it appear in the Bible as the first epistle? Because Rome was the universal empire at the time, there would be fewer obstacles for the promulgation of the gospel if this epistle to Christians in Rome was placed first. People reasoned that Rome, a very important city, had given some cognition to the gospel.

Romans 15:25-27 provides another clue: “But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.” At the time this epistle was written, Paul was getting ready to go to Jerusalem with contributions for the brethren there, who were in need because of the great dearth in the land. He did not visit Rome until AD 64 and then died two years later. Thus he wrote this epistle near the end of his ministry and went to Rome subsequently as a prisoner.

Paul had the brethren in Rome particularly in mind, for in that area, the citadel of the empire, were many Christian Jews as well as Gentile proselytes, who converted to the Christian faith. The epistle was addressed to the Romans, yet nine or ten chapters are devoted almost entirely to the Jews. However, although many of the comments were directed to the Jews, the epistle had a secondary instructional value for the Gentiles by making them feel they were more in the faith. Because of the high-mindedness of the Jews, who were business-oriented and had quite a lot of mental acumen, the Gentiles enjoyed listening to Paul’s reasoning that they, as Christians, were equal to the Jews who had come into Christ. Several times Paul used the

expression “to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile,” but he meant that the Jews were first *in time*, not in priority (Rom. 1:16; 2:9,10). God dealt with the Jews first, and the Gentiles came in later, when the middle wall of partition between them was broken down (Amos 3:2; Eph. 2:14). In the Kingdom, the time feature will again apply—to the Jew first and then to the Gentile—because the capital of the world will be *Jerusalem* and the Holy Remnant of *Israel* will be recognized. In other words, the Jews were not superior in character, for they had as much to learn as the Gentiles; they just had the priority timewise.

Paul knew that the Christians in Rome were going to have certain problems. Since he would not be visiting Rome for a while, he wanted to give advice to this church, which consisted of a mixed element of Jews and Gentiles who met together on a regular basis. What was Paul’s motivation? Realizing that Jews and Gentiles had radically different backgrounds, he wanted to *unify* them by getting them to appreciate each other’s backgrounds and their *one* calling. He wanted them to be *firm in their faith* so that they would not wobble back and forth under the influence of the Judaizing believers, who felt that a Christian had to follow the Law as well as walk in grace and truth by faith. Thus he proceeded to teach the real meaning of the doctrine of *justification by faith*, and the theme of his Epistle to the Romans is justification by faith in the blood of Christ.

A blindfolded virgin woman holding a balance scale is a symbol of justice. The two sides of the scale are even, showing that she is the dispenser of unbiased, impartial justice. Justice is weighed, with one side of the scale being the good and the other side being the bad. Justice frowns on evil and commends good.

In reality, Paul was speaking to relatively new converts of a new religion, and both Jewish and Gentile Christians were in need of instruction. He would point out their faults as well as their strengths and good points. He particularly pursued the subject of justice—what justice is, how it is obtained, and that it is God’s justice. Most people, including the heathen, believe in a supernatural power, but they do not know what or who that power is. They might believe in a pantheon of gods or in an unknown God they cannot define. The Apostle Paul showed that the true God is the God of Israel, the One who revealed a way of justice and righteousness, and he showed how that way can be obtained.

While on the way to Damascus, Paul received the gospel from God through a remarkable revelation by Jesus Christ. Following his conversion, Paul was sent as a special messenger to the Church at large for their edification in learning of God’s will for them in the Gospel Age. Meanwhile, Jesus’ reputation had been given considerable publicity, for after the Crucifixion, people heard what he had done in the little province of Judea—he had raised the dead, healed lepers, preached a new and different doctrine, etc. This news went throughout the empire.

Peter was reputed to be the founder of the church in Rome, but there is no record of his having ever visited the city except for the faint possibility that he was crucified there at the end of his ministry. The church in Rome, which was not well organized and disciplined, was probably the result of what happened at the Feast of Pentecost following Jesus’ resurrection and ascension. At that time, Peter preached the gospel to Jews who had come to Jerusalem for a few weeks. Thus it is likely that the class in Rome comprised the remnants of those who were converted by Peter and John at that feast (Acts 2:41; 4:4).

The Romans would have heard that Jesus was crucified as a malefactor and that he had spoken against Caesar. They also knew that the Roman power had winked the eye, as it were, in allowing him to die the cruel death of crucifixion, as orchestrated by the scribes and Pharisees, the Jewish religious power in Judea. An additional report was circulated that this man had been raised from the dead. He was put to death under baneful circumstances and then raised. Paul

would show that this man, Jesus, was really the Son of God. He would tell about Jesus' origin and show that instead of just being the Messiah of the Jews, the Son of God presented teachings that involved the Gentiles as well. Paul "declared ... the Son of God with power," telling of Jesus' resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4). The "power" was the manifestation of Jesus' being raised from death (and his ascension) "according to the spirit of holiness." Justification by faith was the universal message that through Jesus, the sins of both Jews and Gentiles could be forgiven.

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

In olden times, as was done here, the author of a letter put his name at the beginning. Paul identified himself as a servant and an apostle. He characteristically called attention to the fact he was an apostle, that is, "one sent forth" by Jesus. In other words, he was specially commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to bring a message. He was "called an apostle"; the supplied words "to be" should be omitted, for he was an apostle in the present life.

Despite Paul's persecution of Christians prior to his conversion, there were external evidences of his subsequent apostleship. For example, he had great doctrinal knowledge, he spoke with authority, he raised the dead and healed the sick, and he had miraculous opportunities to speak before kings and high personages. On multiple occasions, he called attention to the vision he had en route to Damascus. Blinded by this vision of the risen Lord, he was led to Ananias for a partial restoration of his sight. Ananias could testify to Paul's apostleship, for the Lord told him that Paul was to be a special representative: "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

Rom. 1:2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

The teaching Paul was espousing—that is, the gospel—was promised in the Hebrew Scriptures. What he was presenting was in harmony with God's Word, as told by "his prophets" (plural). What are a few of these promises from God?

1. The promise to Abraham, which included a heavenly and an earthly seed, was that "in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28:14; 26:4; 32:12).
2. Having faith in the coming Messiah, Moses said, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15).
3. Genesis 3:15 reads, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Here was a promise, after Adam sinned, that some day the scales would be turned from a negative to a more positive viewpoint.
4. The fact that Jude 14,15 speaks of Enoch indicates he was given information in Old Testament times: "And Enoch also ... prophesied ... saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."
5. Another promise is, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that

are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn” (Isa. 61:1).

6. The same prophet wrote, “Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined” (Isa. 9:1,2).

7. Further on in the same chapter, Isaiah wrote, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa. 9:6,7).

8. Moreover, Noah and then Shem brought information from the pre-Flood era, the first world, into the second world.

The gospel was preached but not elaborated on, yet some grasped that little hope, having faith in God that there would be good news in the future. They clung to a little crumb of information with great tenacity. Not until Jesus came was the subject opened up, with life and immortality being brought to light, as well as the mystery “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). The Old Testament prophecies were bits of information, as Paul indicated when he wrote his Epistle to the Hebrews, and the gospel brought them together, starting with Jesus, who gave the remarkable prophecy of Matthew 24 and his personal testimony to John the Revelator.

Rom. 1:3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

Comment: To be the Messiah, Jesus had to come from the seed of David, and to pay the ransom price, he had to be made flesh, that is, a human being. God so arranged matters that through both the supposed earthly father, Joseph, and the earthly mother, Mary, Jesus’ lineage could be traced through David.

Reply: Yes, the principle that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses is a thing established pervades Scripture and is a safeguard against wild speculation (Matt. 18:16). If an idea crops up in our mind, we should make the effort to try to find duplication before presenting it.

A mysterious “David” was prophesied to come. Most think the prophecy refers to David himself, but the terms in which the promise is couched indicate a greater-than-David (Isa. 55:3; Acts 13:34).

Rom. 1:4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

The words “to be” were supplied by the translators. How was Jesus “declared the Son of God with power”? During his earthly ministry, he spoke as never man had spoken, and he healed the sick and the lame (John 7:46). In looking upon this young man, many felt he thought a lot of himself in posing as the Messiah of promise. At first, this inquiry was legitimate, for any honest person who heard more than one testimony about Jesus would want to see and hear this man for himself. Jesus spoke words of wisdom and performed remarkable miracles, giving his hearers words and acts of substance to hang onto. He healed far beyond what any Old

Testament prophets had done. In healing hundreds of people, even restoring missing limbs, he backed up his declaration to be Messiah by innumerable evidences. In addition, his speaking with boldness and authority and his having a marvelous vocabulary and education in the Scriptures without any synagogue training were astounding. Where did the abilities of this carpenter come from?

With such miracles attending the testimony of Jesus, anyone with an honest and open heart would see that indeed he was the promised Messiah, “the messenger of the covenant, whom ye [shall] delight in” (Mal. 3:1). Who delighted in him? The character of his healing and ministry benefited others, for he preached to the poor and healed the sick, the lame, the blind, etc.

Jesus was declared to be the Son of God “according to the spirit of holiness.” Those who observed his personal life could see that it comported with his profession. In everything he did, he was blameless and without fault. Yes, they accused him of blasphemy because of his claim to be the Son of God, but they could not find fault with his personal behavior. Thus power and his possession of a spirit of holiness in everyday life were evidences of his being the Messiah.

In addition—and most importantly—Jesus was declared to be the Son of God “by the resurrection from the dead.” Certainly when he arose from the dead, every single individual in Jerusalem heard about his resurrection because his apostles were delirious with joy. During the 40 days, their testimony was not that strong because he appeared off and on, and they were always waiting for another appearance. But after he ascended to heaven and the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, the apostles were powerful evangelists. Thus all heard of Jesus’ resurrection, but whether or not they believed the reports is another matter. Many were comfortable with their own ideas and their living according to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Rom. 1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

Rom. 1:6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:

Rom. 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

“By whom we have received grace and apostleship [on the way to Damascus], for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name.”

Comment: Verse 5 shows the personal responsibility that Paul felt as an ambassador for Christ.

Reply: Yes, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, he was obedient to the faith. Then in verse 6, he added, “Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.” In other words, “Not only am I called of Jesus Christ in a very special sense, but you Romans are also called of him.”

As the Apostle Paul informs us elsewhere, the call is really of God, but Jesus voices the call (Rom. 8:28-30; 9:22-24; 1 Cor. 1:9; Phil. 3:14; 1 Thess. 2:12; 1 Pet. 5:10). Jesus prayed to his Father and was told who the apostles would be before finding them and saying, “Follow me,” and giving each a new name (Luke 6:12-16). The Twelve then became apostles of Jesus Christ.

Again the words “to be,” supplied by the translators, should be omitted. The consecrated are called “saints” in the present life, even though they do not always retain that relationship in the final analysis. They are holy because they are justified by the blood of Christ.

Notice how Paul addressed the mixed element of Jews and Gentiles in Rome, bringing in both

the Father and the Son: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Of course the epistle is additionally addressed to all Christians throughout the Gospel Age.

Rom. 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

In what way was the faith of Christians in Rome “spoken of throughout the whole world”?

Comment: The eyes of the civilized world were on Rome, for it was the capital and chief city of the empire. Therefore, the Christians there must have been outstanding men and women.

Reply: Yes. To all practical purposes, the Roman Empire was the “whole world.” How remarkable that the gospel took root in the capital of the world, in the very seat of paganism, in the devil’s own house, as it were! The faith of the brethren was to be commended in this environment, for they were on center stage in the eyes of the world. Because of the importance of Rome in the then-known world, news of the success of Christianity in Rome was noised abroad. Incidentally, Aquila and Priscilla were originally in Rome, but they fled to Corinth when persecution subsequently arose. Eventually they ended up in Ephesus.

Comment: With Rome being a principal city, the ecclesia there was surrounded by worldly influences and pressures. Hence the Christians in Rome were admired for the stand they took.

Rom. 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

Verse 9 gives us an insight into Paul’s feelings. At this time, he had never been to Rome, yet the brethren there were especially on his mind. Since they were under an unfavorable influence, he was particularly concerned about them. “Without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.” He said in effect, “As God is my witness, I am telling you the truth. I pray for you constantly.” His words were almost like an oath: “Do not take my words lightly. If I am lying, I will be held accountable.” When the brethren in Rome read this letter, they realized they had a companion, one who was really solicitous for their spiritual welfare and thinking about them all the time. What a wonderful character Paul had!

There were additional reasons for Paul’s solicitude. Since none of the apostles had visited Rome, the brethren in that city had not received any gifts of the Holy Spirit, which would have helped to establish them. Also, God had charged Paul with the responsibility for the brethren. Having been commissioned an apostle of the Gentiles, he was responsible for all ecclesias. Not only was he genuinely concerned, but he was sensitive in his feelings toward them.

Comment: Paul had a long prayer list in addition to preaching the gospel, working to support himself (and others at times), enduring persecutions, etc.

Rom. 1:10 Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

Verse 10 provides further insight into Paul. He repeatedly prayed that he “might have a prosperous journey by the will of God” to visit the brethren in Rome. Feeling “the care of all the churches,” he prayed, “If permissible, I would like to go to Rome. Please send me. If it be your will, I would very much appreciate if somehow your providence would permit me to go there” (2 Cor. 11:28). Paul made this request approximately six years before he died. He did end up in Rome by becoming a prisoner there at least twice. Thus the Lord answered his desire

but in a very different way than Paul had anticipated.

Paul prayed that he might “have a prosperous journey” to Rome. Although the ship encountered a tempestuous sea, he was informed by an angel that not one person in the boat would perish (Acts 27:6-44; 28:1). And that is what happened—all landed safely on the island of Melita, and eventually Paul reached Rome “by the will of God.”

Comment: As much as Paul yearned to visit the Christians in Rome, he did not run ahead of the Lord but awaited some leading or providence.

Paul’s outstanding intellectual qualities and logic far surpassed those of the other apostles. It is true that James Zebedee was very cogent in his reasoning, but there was an unusual comprehensiveness to Paul’s capabilities. Hence most of the epistles were written by him.

Comment: With all of his intellectual abilities, Paul had a tender heart condition.

Rom. 1:11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

Verse 11 is an extension of Paul’s prayer with regard to his interest and concern for the brethren in Rome. Not only did he desire to see them and hear of their experiences and give them further instruction, but he wanted to impart to each a spiritual gift, a gift of the Holy Spirit, by the laying on of hands. The gifts would be useful to them as individuals, as well as to the ecclesia as a whole when the brethren assembled. A mechanical gift was a reward for giving one’s heart and life in consecration.

The same principle operates today. If we look back into our own life, we will see that something happened to convince us God was dealing with us in a personal way. We can trace His leadings in that memory, or experience. It is especially helpful to review such steps of the past when we are having a low period and need to go forward into the unknown, for faith overcomes doubt. Similarly, when the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land, God told them they would get that land, but they had to walk on it. For each step of progress as they planted a foot forward, He would respond favorably. “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses” (Josh. 1:3). Faith had to propel each step. Faith and obedience to God are both rewarded in some way.

Rom. 1:12 That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

When coals of fire are put together, the heat becomes more intense. Hence Paul said that we are not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but ... [are to exhort] one another: and so much the more, as ... [we] see the [evil] day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).

Rom. 1:13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

Paul liked to use the expression “I would not have you ignorant, brethren” (Rom. 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13). He said essentially the same thing in Acts 20:27, “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” He wanted to give the brotherhood as much information as they were capable of understanding.

Oftentimes Paul purposed to visit the Roman Christians “but was let [hindered] hitherto”; that is, he may have made tentative plans to go to Rome, but each time something happened to change the plans. The word “let” was correct in 1611 Old English, but today it has the opposite thought of “permit.”

Paul purposed to visit the Christians in Rome that he might have “some fruit” among them “even as among other Gentiles.” What was that “fruit”? Paul hoped for additional converts—that others would come into the truth—so that the brethren would be further encouraged.

Q: Since Paul was talking in verse 11 about imparting spiritual gifts, would the “fruit” be character growth and development beyond just the mechanical aspect of the gifts?

A: Spiritual gifts were gifts of the Holy Spirit. One must have natural faith before consecration, but if the individual is faithful after consecration, that natural faith blossoms into the more fullness of a spiritual faith. Thus that which was first natural becomes spiritual. Along another line, if one has the natural gift of tongues, then by his meeting with others and having that tongue explained or translated to a person who does not know what he is saying, it becomes a spiritual gift. The principle is the same with those of natural faith. God does not call everyone in the world who has natural faith, but one must have natural faith to be called. Of those with natural faith, God selects the vessels He wishes to call. When natural faith becomes spiritual faith, that development is an enlargement and a bearing of fruit. A seed is natural, bare, and not edible, but when planted into the soil of faith, it grows into a fruit or food that is edible. Stated another way, when that which is natural becomes spiritual, the individual is blessed because of *acting* on that gift. That is why Paul said to Timothy, “Do not neglect the gift that was given to you” (1 Tim. 4:14 paraphrase). By using his gift, Timothy would be blessed, spiritually speaking.

Rom. 1:14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

The term “Barbarians” was used two ways in Paul’s day. (1) The Greeks were not only fond of knowledge, but knowledge was a national characteristic with an emphasis on education. Thus the Greeks (“the wise”) were the educated, whereas the Barbarians (“the unwise”) were poor and lacked opportunity for education. (2) The Romans had a different concept, for they viewed all nations to the north, especially the large and diverse area of Germany, as Barbarians. When the Romans took over in Gaul and England, they considered all Anglo-Saxon peoples of Germanic origin as Barbarians because they lacked culture and education. Paul was saying that he had an equal responsibility to the wise and the unwise, to the poor and the rich—to *all*.

Therefore, from the Greek standpoint, “Barbarians” were Gentiles other than Greeks. And from the Roman standpoint, “Barbarians” were Gentiles from certain areas. Actually, from about AD 300 on, we believe that the Barbarians loved the truth more than the other Gentiles to their south—more than those in Italy, Asia Minor, Egypt, etc. At that time, the Romans, who thought quite highly of themselves, called the Barbarians to the north “Aryans.” From a worldly standpoint, to be a “good” Roman with prestige, one went to a Greek school.

The sign placed above Jesus on the Cross was written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew (Syriac or Aramaic). Certainly when Paul used the term “Barbarians,” he was not thinking of the Jews, the Greeks, or the Romans. Therefore, he was referring to any peoples other than the nationalities that fit these three categories (Luke 23:38).

Rom. 1:15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

“I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.” Paul was an outgoing person. Some feel that if he were humble, he would not have made this statement but would have waited for the Romans to call him. However, Paul *was commissioned* to preach as an apostle. An honest-hearted person who had seen Jesus and heard him speak would weigh the facts and look at the Master’s life and be convinced of the veracity of his teachings and what he stood for. The same was true of Paul. Not one to stay in the background, he said, “I am [a] debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians”; that is, “I am responsible for this work.” He was not presumptuous, but as a “debtor,” he was obligated to teach and to preach. For one who might think Paul was a little pushy and high-minded, his expressing his reason for wanting to go to Rome should have resulted in the conclusion, “The Lord is blessing him, and he has the power, the knowledge, and the spirit.” Paul showed his humility in a different way. A *Manna* comment referring to Daniel says, “All are not leading spirits.” Elsewhere, Paul enjoined the brethren to “be patient toward all [that is, to those who are inclined to be aggressive as well as to those who are backward and need to be drawn out]” (1 Thess. 5:14). Some need to be gently curbed, and others have to be encouraged. Patience should be exercised to both types of brethren. Here we see Paul’s interest in the believer, to the wise as well as the unwise. He had an equal responsibility to both.

What a tremendous man Paul was! He was not prejudiced to the poor or the rich, or to the wise or the unwise. His magnanimous character was an example of what a Christian should be.

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Paul was “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” The Christian religion was not popular, but he was not ashamed to proclaim the gospel among the Greek philosophers. If a Greek became a Christian, other Greeks thought he had lost his reasoning. To the outside, the truth appeared fanatical and foolish. The Greeks, who catered to the intellect, liked to have the learning of all the great philosophers of the past—Plato, Socrates, Demosthenes, etc.

To preach the gospel in Rome in those days was regarded by many as going right into the devil’s stronghold because that city was considered to be the seat of Satan. When John wrote the Book of Revelation and mentioned “Satan’s seat,” the early Church thought the term unmistakably meant Rome (Rev. 2:13). Moreover, the Roman emperors were men like Caligula and Nero. Paul did not overspeak when he said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel.”

As an illustration, those who have been through battle can be somewhat assured. War veterans, who have survived for some time, know that they are trained through experience and are not novices. To have that assurance does not necessarily mean they are proud—they simply recognize that they have survived hand-to-hand combat. As with Paul and other Christians, the heart attitude toward God and Christ is what matters.

Rom. 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

“The gospel of Christ ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.... For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.” Early in this epistle, Paul brought in the teaching of *faith*. In what sense is “the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith”? Faith grows with exercise. The exercise of faith brings increased faith. We are to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12).

Comment: In coming to God, one first has to believe that He exists, so some faith is required to

start with (Heb. 11:6). Then there is a progression in the Christian life with faith deepening.

Reply: Natural faith is necessary to start with. Those whom God calls may be poor in money, intelligence, influence, etc., but they are rich in faith. In other words, in order to respond to the gospel, one must have a certain degree of faith to start with. That faith is one level, and when one obeys, he reaches another level of accomplishment. The development of faith should continue throughout the Christian walk up to a certain point, going from plateau to plateau. Eventually, those who are faithful (full of faith) will see God. One then gains that to which he originally aspired, going up in steps and stairs. With this understanding, we make allowances for others who may not be on the same step. And of course some are on a higher step.

If one develops from one plateau of faith to another, what is the implication? Paul said, “Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith [to faith to faith, etc., all through one’s life].” That development is in harmony with the Scripture “The just shall live by faith” (Hab. 2:4; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).

We all recognize that natural faith is necessary initially—we have to believe that God exists and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. With that faith and our belief in God, we consecrate our all. To jeopardize our whole hope for the future by putting our trust in God and consecrating, we show that we have faith, but that is just the start. All through life, faith has to be exercised. Step by step by step, the just *live* by faith. Thus faith is very important, as Paul tried to teach. His strategy was to show that knowledge is important for progress, but every step of knowledge must be accompanied by a step of grace.

God rewards those who exercise faith. The righteousness of God is *revealed* to those who exercise faith up to a certain point. Those who are at a certain level of faith are rewarded with another level *if* they exercise faith, and God is just to reward them. Therefore, much of our consecration has to do with our daily living by faith, which is difficult to do, especially if we are influenced by outside circumstances that can cause us to become depressed.

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

Rom. 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them.

We are only in the introduction to Paul’s message to the Romans, but who was Paul finding fault with? He was beginning to castigate those in the world who had some sense of right and wrong but were violating their conscience. He addressed the burden of his message by starting with the general public, the unconsecrated. Verses 20-23 tell what they were doing.

The general public displeased God, and Paul found fault with them not just because they were living in sin but because they could know God and did not want to know Him. “That which may [or might] be known of God is manifest in [or to] them; for God hath shown it unto them.” Paul was showing that nobody can stand before God and say, “I am ignorant.” People might reason, “We were born in sin and shaped in iniquity. We are Gentiles and do not know about God, but what we do not know will not hurt us.” This philosophy was carried to quite an extent, but the Gentiles were not blameless, *even though the message of truth had not reached them.*

Paul was saying, “Here is a class who do not know God. They have not received the knowledge of truth as the gospel, but that fact does not excuse them entirely. They are still guilty before God because they could know Him. There is such a thing as conscience, and there is such a thing as common sense in viewing certain matters. Therefore, God is righteous in

condemning them. He is not a God of wrath, for any indignation He might have with regard to sin is justified and cannot be imputed to Him. God is just, and He is righteous, for there is the light of nature and of conscience. All people should exercise faith in such a Creator.” *The Divine Plan of the Ages* goes into this reasoning in the chapter “The Existence of a Supreme Intelligent Creator Established.” The Pastor consistently and constantly showed that the creature should realize his Creator is superior to him in everything—in knowledge, intelligence, love, justice, power, and wisdom. What can the one who is created say to the One who created him? Therefore, without any knowledge of truth, we should, if we have faith in the unseen, recognize that God—whoever or wherever He is—must be superior to everything we are, even to our noblest ideals. Paul was saying in his own way, according to the conditions of his day, what is in that chapter of the *First Volume*.

Comment: The *Diaglott* reads, “Besides, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven in regard to all impiety and injustice of those men, who through injustice, suppress the truth. Because the knowledge of God is apparent among them; for God disclosed it to them.” Not only do men know this truth, but through injustice and unrighteousness, they try to suppress it.

Reply: The truth cannot manifest itself because opposition keeps it from prospering. There is a saying, “Truth crushed to earth will rise again.” Wycliffe’s Bible pictures the Word of God, the truth, as a blacksmith’s anvil. A sledgehammer can beat against the Word of God but cannot defeat it. Though the Bible is suppressed, it will eventually come to the forefront.

The same type of spirit resists progress in the field of medicine, science, and elsewhere. Man tends to like things as they are, the attitude being that nothing should interrupt the status quo, the present state of things. Many of the great pioneers in science had difficult times presenting their findings, even receiving persecution at times. Galileo is an example. God’s truth, which is the most important of all truths, is suppressed, whereas it should be received in humility.

“Men ... hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest ... [to] them.” People reason that if truth is not told to them, they are not responsible, but God is saying His wrath is proper because the whole world manifests His existence, let alone the things in nature. Thus there is no excuse. All should be amenable to, searching for, or listening to His truth. Man thinks there may be other intelligent life and beings in the universe. In fact, some scientists are beaming signals into space, trying to get a response, but they do not search for God. “God hath shown it [truth] unto them.” No man can say he does not know.

This premise is the A,B,C of truth. If one does not know A, he is pretty ignorant, for A is the lowest step on the ladder. Truth is progressive, so if one does not know the heavens, the bottom line of *self-evident* truth, he cannot find fault with God. “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psa. 14:1).

Rom. 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Here are a class who do not know the gospel, but they are without excuse because the “invisible things” of God are made manifest. What are those “invisible things”? They are the things of nature. For example, smelling a flower that has a most beautiful fragrance or seeing one that has an exquisite color or texture bespeaks the character of the Being who made it. Thus the beautiful things of nature, which we can see, give us a little clue as to the invisible Author, Authority, or Power who made them. Both the heavens and terrestrial matters furnish clues of Divinity—that an Intelligent Creator has made them. Therefore, the world is without excuse. In other words, people should analyze what they see. Jesus said, “Consider the lilies of

the field” (Matt. 6:28). David said, “When I *consider* thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psa. 8:3,4). David’s habit of reflecting on things in nature made him praise God.

Notice, “the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are *clearly* seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” God’s great *power and authority* are manifested in the heavens; He “hangeth the earth upon nothing” (Job 26:7). The order of creation reflects God’s *character*, His “Godhead,” that is, His *Divinity*.

“Godhead” should be translated “Divinity” or “Deity.” The term “Godhead,” which is another word for “Creator,” is used by Trinitarians, who want a triple-headed God instead of one Deity. God is the Head, the One who is above all. The reference is to a *monotheistic* power, for nothing in the context, in the logic Paul was pursuing, suggests a triune God. Paul was saying, “We know of the existence of this great invisible God [singular], who is manifest by the things that are made. He is Head above all.”

Comment: If three Gods were coequal and coeternal, how could one be the Head above the other two? The reasoning on the Trinity does not make sense.

Comment: We should keep in mind that Trinitarians translated the King James Bible to begin with. Instead of “Godhead,” six other translations have the following:

American Standard Version - “his everlasting power and divinity”

Revised Standard - “his eternal power and deity”

Goodspeed - “his eternal power and divine character”

Knox - “his eternal power and his divineness”

Moffatt - “his everlasting power and divine being”

Weymouth - “his eternal power and divine nature”

Reply: Yes, interpretations of the Greek favor the opposite, namely, a monotheistic power. We used the word “character” earlier. God’s power is manifested by the things that were made, especially in celestial things or in the intricacy of His workmanship, but sound, the sweetness of fragrance, and the beauty of sight are a reflection of His personality, Being, or Deity. The contrast is between God’s power and His personality, which are being reflected.

Paul was speaking about the universality of the existence of sin and saying that God is displeased. All stand guilty of sin; all are condemned before Him. Paul would show that the contagion of sin is all-pervasive, embracing the whole world. The *wrath* of God is one side of the balance scale, and His *mercy*, the other side, balances the scale.

Comment: Verse 20 reads as follows in the Revised Standard: “Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”

Reply: In other words, “the heavens declare the glory of God” (Psa. 19:1). Their message should be understood by all. Everyone—Jew, Greek, Gentile—stands equally guilty because the language of the heavens is universal with regard to the glory of God and the existence of an Intelligent Creator. The invisible things of God are “understood by the things that are made,” even His eternal power and Divinity, so the people are “without excuse.”

Rom. 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Rom. 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

Verses 21 and 22 tell what happens when people suppress knowledge and resist truth. Everything is in motion, with life being like a stream going downhill, following gravity. To be faithful to God, we must swim against the stream. If we do not pursue the truth to come to the source of the river of God, we will go downhill with the world, retrogressing and becoming foolish. To say some “have gone out of the truth” means they had a measure of light but did not respond favorably and drifted away. Paul warned that this process happens to those who let things “slip.” “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip [slide backwards]” (Heb. 2:1).

Those who do not search and hunger for righteousness are without excuse “because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.” Paul was speaking of the universality of both sin and available knowledge, saying, “This deplorable state is the situation that exists. Neither Jews nor Gentiles have an excuse, yet they blame God.” When something unfortunate happens, we often hear others blame God. “Why did God do this to me?” they ask. Of course they do not think about their attitude toward God before the tragedy occurred.

Comment: Verses 21 and 22 are a continuation from verse 20. When mankind view God by the heavens, they still do not glorify Him, nor are they thankful. “When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.”

Reply: Even for those who do not have the truth, there are many things to be thankful for, such as the sense of smell, sight, taste, the mechanics of movement, pleasures, the ability to think, etc. Generally speaking, one who commits suicide goes completely against reason because life, even for only a few years, is a privilege. A person with a truly thankful heart would want to know the God to whom he could render his thanks. In looking upward, he would have the desire that someday, somehow, somewhere, he would find the truth.

Comment: Psalm 107:21,22 reads, “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.”

Some people who are fascinated by things of God’s creation will dedicate the remainder of their life to study about a gorilla or a flower, for example. Noble-minded people use energy and dedication, even to the extent of sacrifice, to go into wilderness areas to explore the object of their interest at great jeopardy to their own life and health, but God does not choose them for various reasons. Natural faith is essential for progress in things pertaining to Deity.

“[They] became vain in their imaginations.” Examples of such vanity are making statues or symbols to worship, or worshipping an animal or the sun or the moon.

“And their foolish heart was darkened.” When a person is given the opportunity for progress in knowing about God and does not avail himself of it, instead of just being stalled, he actually slips back in understanding. He becomes more and more crystallized in that state and is “darkened” as far as receiving new and/or progressive understanding.

Comment: The principle being established here is that people’s senseless minds are darkened if they turn against what truth is available through conscience and nature. That same principle carries forward to the consecrated; namely, “If therefore the light that is in thee be[come] darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23).

Reply: The consecrated, who are spiritually minded, have a measure of status quo but not

those in the world, where the devil is operative. Satan makes sure that one goes down into the cesspool as fast as possible. Consider some of the great scientists with brilliant minds. The more intelligence they manifest, the more stupid they become as regards God. They have all kinds of absurd theories, such as the Big Bang theory whereby everything is going faster and faster to destruction in a hundred million years or so. With all their investigation, they are getting further and further away from God.

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools [from God’s standpoint].” As such individuals near the end of their career, it becomes more and more obvious that the more they know through their vain imaginations, the less they know of true wisdom, yet they speak words of self-adulation and self-promotion.

Rom. 1:23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

What are some of the things that were “made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things”? Idols of worship have been so fashioned. Carvings, statues, and paintings have been made of bulls, birds, insects, serpents, etc. Four spheres are covered in verse 23: man, birds, beasts, creeping things.

In what way did man change the nature of the incorruptible God into a corruptible being? Mortal animals and created beings are worshipped instead of the immortal God, the Creator. Not only are idols manufactured by corruptible man, but the idols themselves deteriorate over time and corrupt and erode. Also, they depict things that die. All down the line, the inferior quality should be recognized as such.

Incidentally, to have a painting, for example, of a bird or a beast to represent liberty is not sinful because it is not being used as an object of worship. In fact, the attributes of God are pictured as a lion, an ox, an eagle, and a man. These symbols were used in the Hebrew religion and introduced by God to represent His character. In other words, it is one thing to look at these as being symbolic of an attribute of God, and it is another matter to look at them as being representative of God Himself. From one perspective, the symbols can be an abomination, and from another perspective, they can be a help. Paul was criticizing giving more attention to idols, statues, candles, etc., and even Mary, than to God Himself or to Jesus.

Comment: What utter foolishness for man to worship his equal or even something on a lower plane than himself—birds, beasts, and reptiles—and to ignore the Creator!

Reply: The holy angels must be astounded to look down and see the degradation of man in such worship.

Comment: In referring to the Catholic Church and the doctrine of the Mass, Martin Luther expressed the same principle by saying, “How can a man make his Maker?”

Comment: After witnessing the great miracles of Almighty God, the Israelites quickly turned to making a golden calf in harmony with the heathen worship of Egypt.

Rom. 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:

God gave such individuals “up to uncleanness through the lusts [desires] of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.” He let them pursue whatever their heart lusted for. A “lust” is a very strong desire along various lines. Two forms of uncleanness

through lust are homosexuality and lesbianism, which are unnatural and vile. Along another line, the Israelites wanted a king instead of judges. All God had to do to give the world over to this darkness was to withdraw His favor or not to grant special favor. After all, if Satan is the god of this world and the father of the disobedient, and if the whole world is under his influence, God could just let the people go their own way. Two forces—Satan, an *outside* power, and their own fanciful imagination, an *inside* power—were against them.

What happens when a baby is born? The little baby is not aware of the sun, moon, and stars, but that baby grows up into adolescence, teenage years, and adulthood. In the meantime, especially back there when people could observe nature and the sky more readily, as each individual reached the age of responsibility, God was manifested to him through nature. Thus God has revealed this opportunity to each generation. If a person does not respond properly, he is under the influence of Satan, and God just leaves him alone. To be drawn of God, one has to exercise natural faith. In spite of the evil influences, some people have faith, which Satan would like to squelch. God is very interested in those who have natural faith, and how they respond to situations in life is important. As they respond favorably, God gives them more and more protection and enlightenment so that they can go from “faith to faith” (Rom. 1:17).

Rom. 1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Man willfully “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.” By observation, man can see the natural instincts of animals. For example, a homing pigeon flies back to the place it came from. Likewise man himself knows by instinct that certain things are proper yet intentionally represses that instinct and disobeys. After a while, the person becomes insensitive, and God gives him over to a reprobate mind. At that point, the individual can no longer judge by instinct. Such repression is called searing the conscience (1 Tim. 4:2). If an individual responds, God provides corresponding light.

Why did Paul add that the Creator “is blessed for ever. Amen”? Having just lectured on a low topic, he raised the thinking to the highest plane.

Comment: The *Diaglott* reads, “Who exchanged the truth concerning God for a false religion, and revered and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is worthy of praise to the ages. Amen!”

Reply: Paul had just shown the foolishness of man—how dumb, how crude, how vile, how vulgar he is—whereas God should be “blessed for ever.” Man perverted the manifest existence of the Intelligent Creator into all kinds of objects and images of worship.

Comment: Jeremiah 10:14,15 states, “Every man is brutish in his knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.”

Reply: Yes, even the statues and images will be destroyed.

Comment: People in this country pride themselves in being advanced because they no longer believe in false gods, but evolution, which teaches that man descended from a beast, is really just another step in the same degraded process.

Rom. 1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:

Rom. 1:27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

Rom. 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

First, Paul showed that the world is held accountable by the light of nature. God is righteous in condemning the world because the invisible things are manifest by the things that are made. The people should realize there is a superior power.

Paul's next subject, gross immoralities that dishonor the body, pertained more to conscience and instinct. His criticism was directed against those who willfully change what previously had been natural. It is one thing to be abnormally born, and it is another thing to be normally born and, by constant practice, pervert that which the human body is endowed with by nature and knowingly do things that are unnatural. In such cases, God gives men and women "up unto vile affections," allowing them to pursue the paths they lust after.

For example, if a woman starts to become masculine—cutting her hair short like a man and dressing in men's clothes—she will lose all her womanliness in time. The error of the way becomes more and more manifest as she habitually caters to this tendency, until she becomes abnormally developed in what started out mildly.

The men described in verse 27 receive "in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet." In other words, they played around with the sin and eventually became addicted to it, whatever it might be.

Comment: Verse 27 reads as follows in the Revised Standard: "And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error." AIDS and certain sexually transmitted diseases are some of those penalties.

As a superior being, Satan takes unfair advantage of fallen humanity who have pursued the basic practice of homosexuality and lesbianism. As he puts in his fangs and controls and manipulates them as his tools, the hapless victims become his amusement park. Those who are not in Christ are of their father the devil (John 8:44).

Verses 26-28 are good to use if we are trying to help someone with these unnatural tendencies. Education in itself does not prevent sin. In fact, man's education has been allowed to advance to show that by no means does it bring salvation. Only God's education and instruction—His Word—lead to salvation. The permission of evil has been allowed to progress as an everlasting object lesson. Never again after the Kingdom Age will evil be permitted anywhere in the universe. Eve was tempted of the devil and seduced through the instrumentality of a serpent that probably ate the forbidden fruit. The thirst for inquisitiveness has been a problem for the human race and needs to be governed. In the final analysis, it will be seen that the permission of evil is the best method God could have used. This everlasting lesson will not have to be repeated. Thus we are really in the beginning of the creation of intelligent human beings.

God gave a perfect Law to the nation of Israel, but fallen man could not keep it. Therefore, man needs not only the Law but the enforcement of that Law. Christ will rule the nations "with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2:27).

Rom. 1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness,

maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

Paul was giving a broad-brush description of conditions that exist in the world, that is, among the unconsecrated. The heavens declare the glory of God, but very few of the human race, proportionately speaking, take these things to heart and begin a quest, or search, for the presence of God in their life.

Probably there should be a colon after the word “unrighteousness.” “Being filled with all unrighteousness: fornication, wickedness, [etc.]....” The other nouns describe various forms of habitual, or continuing, unrighteousness. “Fornication” includes all types of illicit relationships that are usually done in secret. “Wickedness” refers to individuals whose characters are habitually seen as evil in talk and conduct. “Covetousness,” an inordinate desire for something, can occur in regard to money, position, influence, popularity, a neighbor’s wife, property, etc. “Maliciousness” pertains to malice and ill feelings toward others. “Covetousness” is a habit of thought that usually leads to *action*, whereas being “full of envy” is inward in connection with something not obtainable.

Some of these traits occur inwardly but are busting to come out. Others are manifested in various ways and to different degrees of intensity. “Murder” is a degree of hatred that, if not controlled, can result in taking the life of another person. Incidentally, it is proper to call attention to an evil person who is undermining faith. Pointing him out would damage his influence and reputation, but his habitual wrong conduct needs to be noted. On rare occasions, hatred is permissible. As David said, “Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies” (Psa. 139:21,22). There is “a time to love, and a time to hate” (Eccl. 3:8).

For the consecrated to speak evil of one of God’s truly holy ones is “murder” but not an obvious murder in the sense of a gross deed (2 Pet. 2:10; Jude 8). Rather, evil speaking is a subtle sin. Sometimes the influence of others in teaching should be stopped because it is dangerous, but we must be very sure that we are right. In making such a judgment, we should pray about and consider the matter carefully before committing ourselves. Unfortunately, many judgments are made irrationally and unjustly and are done without due consideration. Under those conditions, the old man speaks out, and the new creature is more reserved. To do things impetuously is more apt to be the old man speaking. The old heart is “deceitful above all things, and desperately [exceedingly] wicked”; it wants to get out and express itself as it did prior to consecration (Jer. 17:9). When we weigh the mercies of God on our behalf—what He has done for us and the hope of the high calling—the desires of the old man fade away. Much has to do with our thinking.

A person may have two or more of these traits, but usually one trait is more manifest than the other(s). “Debate” refers to one who is argumentative by nature, one who looks for and delights in arguments. “Deceit” is self-explanatory. “Malignity,” or maligning others, is giving false witness with the intent to injure them and ruin their reputation. This would be a chronic condition, not a one-time false witness against someone with regard to a particular situation. Malignity is habitually giving malicious false witness throughout one’s life. A person with this habit sees no good in anyone and is always criticizing.

“Whisperers” spread careless, damaging gossip that is not proclaimed openly. It may be hard to identify or get a handle on a whisperer because the gossip is done in a snide, sly, and shrewd way. Depending on the type of problem, when certain things need to be pointed out, sometimes we should use discretion, and at other times that is not the case.

Rom. 1:30 Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things,

disobedient to parents,

The term “backbiters” reminds us of Genesis 49:17, “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward [to his destruction].” With regard to the consecrated, one who is held responsible for an individual’s going out of the truth becomes a partaker of the destruction.

Being “proud” is the next trait. There are different degrees of pride, but in this case, the trait would be known and obvious. Sometimes one who is envious misjudges a noble person as proud when that is his own condition. Pride can be analyzed, but we have to be careful in making judgments. In time, as little things add up, pride becomes apparent.

“Boasters” are braggarts and those who are given to exaggeration. The Apostle Paul found it necessary to boast on one occasion in order to legitimize his own apostleship and to stop the falsely assumed apostleship of others, but that was not his usual manner. He had to tell about all his sufferings for Christ (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

The term “inventors of evil things” is such an evil trait that we do not want to describe it. “Disobedient to parents” means to have no respect for parents, whereas the commandment says to honor father and mother. “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:32). If we disagree and see that a parent is definitely wrong, we should do so as pleasantly as possible and use decorum.

After describing all of these conditions in the world, Paul used that history to teach certain lessons to the consecrated. Thus verses 29-31 are the backdrop for subsequent lessons for the Christian. Paul listed so many evil traits because he wanted to touch the nerve of some in order to awaken them to the fact that the process of reformation had not been entirely effected. Even though we repent in coming to Christ, some undesirable traits remain and come with us. One by one, over time, we try to overcome the hangovers from the old man. Striving to overcome shows that our repentance was true. “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). At first, we observe the grosser traits, but later on we find that the old man has refined or gentler methods of evil.

Rom. 1:31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

Those “without understanding” can do the most wretched things and not even realize what they are doing. No matter what one does to show them the condition they are manifesting, they cannot see it. They respond with something like, “The problem is with you.” Having “understanding” is knowing what Jesus would do in decision making. The *Diaglott* has the word “obstinate,” which means that one retains his wrong thinking.

Being “covenantbreakers” is a very insidious trait. If a person backs out after signing a legal document—for example, a contract or a marriage certificate—he is breaking a covenant. However, covenant breaking can occur all down the line. With regard to the consecrated, if a person has been in the truth for a long time and is fairly advanced in character, then “yes” and “no” can become the test with regard to covenant breaking. Jesus said that our “yes” should be yes and our “no” should be no (Matt. 5:37).

As soon as any of these traits get on a more obvious and malignant level, they should be dealt with radically. The little remarks on the side are harder to handle. “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines [of fruitage in Christian growth and character]: for our vines have tender grapes” (Song 2:15). The Lord judges our intent, and none of us will be perfect in this

fight. We must wage a lifelong battle.

A form of covenant breaking is for one to say, “The Lord did not accept my consecration; I did not know what I was doing.” To agree with a person who makes such a statement makes one a partaker in that sin. It would be better to misunderstand in the other direction and warn the individual about the responsibilities of consecration than to justify reneging on the vow. It is true that the Lord may not accept someone’s consecration, but if the person has outwardly professed consecration, we have to take that statement at face value. What God thinks about the vow is between Him and the individual. When certain things happen, we *hope* that the person’s consecration was not accepted, but we should not say it, especially when Jesus said he would not cast out any who came to him from the Father (John 6:37).

The trait “without natural affection” is a little harder to discern because many people by nature would be considered stern, yet they might be well-developed Christians. Just as in the floral realm, God has flowers of all kinds and colors, so there are many kinds of temperaments, as pictured by the jewels on the high priest’s breastplate. Being “without natural affection” is a stronger trait when applied to the world, for it signifies a person who is so stony-hearted that he cannot listen to reason and has no sense of pity for others. Habitual crudeness and rudeness in disposition are a part of one’s character or upbringing and have to be rooted out.

Comment: Another form of being “without natural affection” is manifested by parents who abuse a helpless newborn baby or older children. For this trait, the NIV has “heartless.”

Reply: Yes. Sometimes people who appear to be the gentlest in society are the cruelest, even with their soft remarks. This inward characteristic will manifest itself in deeds.

The word “implacable” should be omitted from the listing, as indicated in a footnote in the *Diaglott*. To be “unmerciful” is to be without mercy.

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

Comment: For the end of verse 32, the New American Standard says, “They not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.” The Twentieth Century reads, “Not only are they guilty of them [these sins] themselves, but they even applaud those who do them.” Taylor has, “Yet they went right ahead and did them anyway, and encouraged others to do them too.” The *Diaglott* reads, “Not only are doing them, but even are approving those who practice them.”

Reply: Each translation has a little different facet that can be read into the verse. It is wrong to back up the wrongdoer with friendship, support, and sympathy. Just as bad conditions existed with natural Israel, so these conditions are characteristic of human history.

Q: If we apply this verse to the world in the present age, what “death” are the unconsecrated worthy of?

A: Even worldly people with higher sensitivities recognize that when sin develops to such an unusual degree, the individual should be put to death. Although verse 32 does not refer to Second Death, when individuals with these traits come out of the grave in the Kingdom Age, they will be worthy of Second Death, everlasting extinction, if they continue in such sins.

“Who knowing the judgment of God.” This class really know that what they are doing is wrong, but they feel strength in numbers, in the company of other sinners. They flock together

in fellowship. Not only do they themselves commit these sins, but they idolize and admire those who are even worse sinners.

Comment: Paul addressed this letter to the Christians in Rome, yet he was speaking about what was happening around them in the world.

Reply: Yes, he had a strategy, a reason, for first showing the conditions in the world. Verse 32 is a transitional verse preparatory to discussing the consecrated, the brotherhood, starting in Romans 2:1. Paul went into great detail in verses 29-31 because glimpses and manifestations of these former habits were being carried over into the brotherhood. He was pursuing a course that would be most helpful to the Roman church. Chapter 2 should have started with verse 32, which leads to an examination of the brotherhood, who should know better.

In ancient times, there were usually just three types of employment: agrarian, religious, or military. The most secure job was in the military, which even included a retirement plan. The Roman army was especially well disciplined, well organized, and orderly. Moreover, Roman law was inviolate and rigid. Thus being without natural affection and unmerciful were national inbred traits of the Roman culture. What the law said was followed without wavering or any consideration for extenuating circumstances.

Rom. 2:1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

Using regular logic, we would normally say that “O man” is the unregenerate man in the world, but the answer is yes and no. Paul had just been talking about the unconsecrated, but now he was saying that manifestations of these traits can creep into the brotherhood itself, as the second half of the verse shows: “For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.” Only the consecrated are being judged now. The unconsecrated will be judged in the next age. At that time, God will forgive the murderers and others, and He will treat them as He deems proper to handle the situation with retribution. However, Paul was not writing to the Roman populace but was writing to the brotherhood about the Roman populace and how the consecrated have to be on guard lest these traits and characteristics creep into the Church.

Comment: The Apostle John wrote, “Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds [the deeds of Diotrephes] which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (3 John 10). Here is an example of maliciousness in the Church.

Comment: We talk about the nominal system being worldly and lowering its standards when the same conditions can exist among ourselves too.

Reply: Yes, these conditions can very easily creep in.

Comment: Jesus said one should look at himself before judging others (Matt. 7:3-5).

Reply: Yes, Paul was talking about the tendency to judge others. Eventually, he would discuss a real problem that existed in the early Church between Jews and Gentiles. Paul began with the basics and then went into the nitty-gritty applications to the brotherhood.

Q: Was Paul saying, for example, “Let us assume that we are going behind someone’s back and maligning his character, yet we turn around and accuse that person of committing the same sin

we are guilty of ourselves”?

A: Yes, that is what Paul was trying to show. He went into great detail to make sure he made everyone feel guilty so that the brethren would be less apt to be judgmental in the future. When some people consecrate, they find they cannot seem to get rid of certain habits. A quick temper is one such trait. Several with this characteristic have said from the platform that when they get into this frame of mind, they count to ten. That way the old man does not come out of the box hastily and do things that the new creature is sorry for and that require amends. If, after counting to ten, the brother feels just as intense, then perhaps he is correct. Counting to ten puts a harness on the old man.

Rom. 2:2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

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

“The judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.” There are different perspectives in reading this statement. What are some of them?

Comment: God’s judgment is perfect; He does not make a mistake.

Comment: The invisible God sees everything we do. If we judge someone else, God knows all about our own conduct and the conduct of the other party. He knows the truth of the matter.

God is no respecter of persons in judgment. Friendship is dangerous because it is harder to speak words of correction to a friend than to an enemy. God judges impartially according to the facts. Being two-edged, the Word of God, the sword of the Holy Spirit, must be wielded carefully lest it damage us (Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16). We get cut when we do the same things as the person we wield it against.

Comment: The Revised Standard reads, “We know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who do such things. Do you suppose, O man, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God?”

Reply: God judges righteously because He knows all the facts. Being down here in the flesh, we are limited in our vision. If possible, we should try to get both sides of the story so that we will not make a hasty decision that is regretted later—and even years later.

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

Rom. 2:5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Paul was speaking to the brotherhood and saying that God leads them to repentance. Verses 4 and 5 tell of an ongoing and *progressive repentance throughout our consecrated walk*. To develop a Christlike character takes time; in fact, it is our life’s work. Very few have the character, disposition, and strength of will of Paul or Stephen, but Paul was specially kept on the scene because he was used to help others, whereas he could have made his calling and election sure much earlier. God kept him in the ministry to benefit the brotherhood.

Comment: With the concept of false love, which has made inroads into the true Church, some

brethren have forgotten how to weigh justice in their dealings with other brethren who may have committed deeds that are displeasing to the Heavenly Father. Not only do they shut their eyes to grievous sin, but the subject is painful for them to talk about. Thus they would rather not know that evil exists.

Reply: For instance, some years ago a prominent brother wrote a tract on homosexuality. The title “Homosexuality and Christianity, Compatible or Contradictory?” should have been an immediate warning. The sum and substance of the tract was to justify homosexuality as being a relationship that is as honorable and sacred as a heterosexual relationship of male and female. Some brethren did not see that the tract was wrong, whereas the title should have been an instant red flag. An appropriate title would have been “The *Incompatibility* of Homosexuality with Christianity.”

In the *Reprints*, we see the heart and soul of the Pastor in regard to character development. We can see the nobility of his thinking, but many revere him so much that they do not realize the Bible is ten times more holy than his comments. For instance, many issues in life can only be addressed by what the Bible teaches. The Pastor was concerned with the plan of God and the fact that the world will have an opportunity. The *First Volume* proves the existence of an intelligent, loving Creator, who has a plan for all people. All of these topics are good and have done much to influence us and help us to bow down and kneel before our Heavenly Father, but no one can word the nitty-gritty understanding of His will better than God Himself in His Word. Therefore, a lack of familiarity with the Bible creates problems, and brethren need to be immersed in the Bible itself, as well as in the dispensational truth brought forth by the Pastor. What the seventh messenger wrote should whet our appetite to want to know the Bible better. To be like God and His Son—to think and talk like them—we need to listen to His Word.

Verse 4 mentions “the riches” of God’s goodness and His “forbearance and longsuffering.” The fact that God called us out of darkness into His marvelous light should have an influence on us, giving us patience in regard to His dealings with others who have taken the same step of consecration.

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” Instead of instructing us to lay up treasure in heaven, verse 5 describes laying up judgment and wrath, telling us what not to do. Paul was saying that history will justify God and reveal His righteous judgment. Jesus said, “Wisdom is justified of her children” (Matt. 11:19). History will reveal the facts as they really are. Of course the holy angels know the direction in which things are flowing.

Rom. 2:6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

The righteous judgment of God “will render to every man [Jew and Gentile] according to his deeds.” In other words, the sword of truth is double-edged, with its principles applying to all—to self as well as to others. Paul mentioned the Jews in chapter 1 and also the Greeks and the Barbarians (Rom. 1:14). Although he did not bring the Romans by name into that equation, the term “Greeks” included them. This seeming omission is interesting because when Alexander the Great died, the Grecian Empire was divided into four parts, with one of his four generals being assigned to the Roman segment of the society that existed at that time, around 300 BC (Dan. 7:6). Thus the Grecian influence predated the Roman influence. Even though Rome was on the calendar about 776 BC, it did not really affect history until approximately 100 BC, when it began to supersede the influence of Greece. In Paul’s day, the Greek language was used extensively by the Romans and other peoples of the empire. Therefore, the Greek and Latin languages were predominant in the empire. Of course there were three languages in Israel: Aramaic (Jewish), Latin (Roman), and Greek. From AD 100 on, Israel began to fade from

significance, whereas Greek and Latin remained in the picture.

Rom. 2:7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

Comment: Verse 7 refutes the concept of “once in grace, always in grace.” Paul said, “By patient continuance [or *persistence*] in well doing,” we seek for glory, honor, and immortality.

Reply: Yes. The thought is, “To those who patiently continue in well doing, seeking for glory, honour, and immortality, God will give eternal life.” Eternal life is the gift to all faithful believers, whereas glory, honor, and immortality are the reward for the elect few.

Rom. 2:8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

Verse 8 is a contrast with verse 7. Those who are contentious and disobedient will receive indignation and wrath.

Comment: The *Diaglott* has, “But indignation and wrath to those who are factious [of ‘a party spirit’—see interlinear], and obey not the truth but obey unrighteousness.”

Reply: The “party spirit” in Rome was the Gentile versus the Jewish Christian. A problem existed between these two main divisions. Being more familiar with God’s Word, the Jews felt superior to the Gentile converts and thus adopted a superior mode of behavior and speech. Of course the Gentiles resented this attitude, and the two divisions were automatically set up against each other. Paul was trying to ease that situation. As a Jew with outstanding qualifications—being a Pharisee of the Pharisees—he first wanted to win their confidence.

Verses 7 and 8 applied to both Jews and Gentiles. For both groups, a contentious spirit was not commendable, and glory, honor, and immortality were the reward for more-than-overcomers. Chapter 1 discusses the depravity of the human race, especially the Gentiles, who were without God and were given to idolatry and all kinds of false worship. Unfortunately, these traits infiltrated the Jewish belief, for as Jews departed from God, they adopted some of the heathen practices (Jer. 10:1-15). Thus both Jews and Gentiles were involved in the debauchery. Paul then commended the Gentiles who accepted Christ, saying that the startling faith of the Romans was known throughout the world (Rom. 1:8).

“Wrath” in this context does not necessarily mean utter destruction but God’s displeasure and indignation. Jews had the standard of the Law, and Gentiles had nature and the light of conscience. Certain types of vices seemed to afflict Jews and Gentiles equally, whereas other sins were not as much a problem to the Jew because of the training of the Law. Nevertheless, since a person who disobeyed one part of the Law was guilty of the whole Law, all were guilty before God regardless of the degree of seeming moral deportment (James 2:10).

Those who are factious, contentious, and self-willed are not obeying the truth, the thinking of God, in regard to principles. We should not be either hypercritical or hypocritical.

Rom. 2:9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

Rom. 2:10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

Rom. 2:11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

When Paul said, “To the Jew first, and [then] also to the Gentile,” he was not saying “To the Jew more, and what remains to the Gentile.” Rather, he was speaking of a *time* element. God is no respecter of persons, Jew or Gentile, who come into Christ. Shortly after Paul’s decease, the Jews received “tribulation and anguish” when millions were put to death in the trouble of AD 69-73. The wrath being stored up would occur in just a few years from the writing of this epistle. Later on, the Gentiles received “tribulation and anguish” in the fall of Rome and other catastrophes. At the end of the Gospel Age, judgment will come on everyone, Christian and non-Christian, in the great Time of Trouble. “Judgment” will come on every individual from the standpoint of inspection. Thus verse 9 is prophetic. Incidentally, in the Kingdom Age too, the principle will be “to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”

The pageantry of the heavens declaring the glory of God, plus the conscience that is in man, are a twofold witness that God is just in judging the Gentiles, who do not know God’s Law. Gentiles are condemned by nature and by the conscience that God originally implanted in Adam, which still exists in a fragmentary state. Paul started chapter 2 in broad terms. Now he was speaking about the natural inherited characteristics of the Jews whereby they felt superior to the Gentiles. At this point, he was not getting into the high level of consecration and sanctification. First, Paul was using common sense; later he would speak like a theologian. He was saying that Jewish and Gentile converts had both been trained as natural men by the influences that are common to man. Just as the Jew back there had more of a *vener* of righteousness, so today, in both the nominal Church and the true Church, education is giving a *vener* of righteousness. It is difficult to rid oneself of that influence or environment.

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

Rom. 2:13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

Rom. 2:14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

The Gentiles, who “have sinned without [outside the] law shall also perish without [the] law,” and the Jews, who “have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.” Paul was beginning to put in the clutch and come more to the consecrated element.

Next, in verses 13 and 14, Paul made a distinction between the nominal Jewish believer and even the nominal Gentile believer. “The [nominal Jewish] hearers of the law” are not “just before God.” In other words, it was easy to say, “I am a Jew,” but how many were “doers of the law”? In Jesus’ day, the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees was, “Who are you to condemn us *carte blanche*? Aren’t we the children of Abraham?” (Matt. 3:9 paraphrase). In fact, they even implied that Jesus was illegitimate: “Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God” (John 8:41).

When Jesus said, “The *doers* of the law shall be justified,” he did not mean those who obeyed the Law perfectly, for no man can be justified by the Law (Gal. 3:11). However, one who *tried to obey* the Law was more than a hearer. A Jew who was trying to live a life pleasing to God, and to obey the Law to the extent that he could, certainly manifested a better attitude than one who claimed to be a Jew but committed all kinds of sins contrary to the spirit of the Law.

“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature [by conscience] the things

contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.” What was Paul saying? The Jews were criticizing the Gentiles for not being schooled under the Law, yet those Gentiles were exemplary in trying to please God. Instead of marveling at the change that was taking place among the Gentiles, the Jews were prejudiced. Therefore, Paul was saying, “What is the matter with you? Can’t you see the remarkable change that has taken place? That change should stop your criticism and make you think twice.” After receiving the vision of the sheet coming down from heaven with clean and unclean animals in it, the Apostle Peter reasoned, “When I baptized Cornelius and other Gentiles, they got the Holy Spirit, so who am I to fight God?” (Acts 10:9-16). Gentiles wanted to be baptized, and Peter, having observed the change, properly reasoned, “I couldn’t say them nay.” However, the attitude of the Jews in Rome was, “We are the only ones. A person must first go to the Pharisees and be schooled. Then, when he attains a certain level, he can have the privilege of becoming a proselyte.” How different is the process of coming into Christ! First, one has to repent. Then the repentant sinner who accepts Jesus as his personal Savior and gives his heart to God is welcomed into Christ, being adopted into the Christian Church with full status.

Comment: Proverbs 20:27 reads, “The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.”

Reply: The New Testament says that the Word of God searches even the marrow of the bones (Heb. 4:12). The Holy Spirit of the Lord works deeply.

A misdeed is a misdeed—period! However, the *measure* of guilt is another matter. God is impartial in judgment. If the heart is right, the punishment will be less, but all unrighteousness receives retribution. Though God’s judgments are just and severe, His promises are sure, and we can count on both.

With both Jew and Gentile, a sin is a sin. The cliché that ignorance is bliss is not true. Just because the Gentiles were not under the Law was no excuse. One is not free of guilt and judgment if he willingly and/or willfully avoids more knowledge in an attempt to avoid more responsibility. If one disobeys conscience regardless of his state, he errs.

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

If these Gentiles did wrong, they acknowledged it. If they did what was right according to the Law of God, they had confidence. While they had a conviction of heart and were trying to do what they had learned of the Law and the gospel, justification is by grace, not by the works of the Law. Nevertheless, they were to be commended for their efforts. Paul was undercutting the attitude of aloofness and superiority of the Christian Jew. For Jewish converts to sincerely accept Christ was one thing, but it was hard for them to unlearn their former heritage and training under the Law. In other words, it was harder for the Jew to unlearn certain things than it was for one without such training to learn and develop under the Christian religion.

Paul concentrated so much on the negative aspect with regard to the Jew that afterward he said, “I am not trying to say that being a Jew is a disadvantage. The disadvantage is with the individual whose heart attitude is wrong.” Receiving the truth of the gospel *in humility* makes the difference. Gentile Christians felt very keenly the Jews’ contentious, superior attitude toward them.

Apparently, many of the Roman Gentile Christians were not too learned, but they could understand common sense. Fortunately, one does not need an education to have common sense. Paul tried to use common sense with both Gentile and Jewish Christians. In fact, he

devoted several chapters to the Jews in an effort to change their attitude of superiority. To undermine their confidence, he used one point after another. Around chapter 11, he felt he had said enough and began to draw general conclusions. By then, the Jewish Christians would be in a more humble state of mind and thus be more amenable to his reasoning. First, Paul tried to wean them from their prejudices, and then he tried to encourage them.

The Gentiles had “the law written in their hearts,” and their consciences bore witness to the fact. While they admitted their wrongs, Paul did not want their humility to prevent them from realizing they were doing some things right. Educated common sense informs a person when things are wrong and also when improvements are made. From time to time, the Christian should examine himself to make sure he is in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). As he gets in a reflective mood, he should look back and try to see not only what his pitfalls and weaknesses have been but also, as an encouragement, what his strengths and remarkable accomplishments have been, especially those that were not in his nature to start with but that occurred because of God’s influence in his life. It is helpful to reflect on times when we know we did the right thing because God gave us the courage and the strength.

Rom. 2:16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

God will “judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ” according to Paul’s gospel. In this age, Jesus is our High Priest, walking in and out amidst the seven candlesticks, trimming the wicks and supplying the oil (Rev. 2:1). At God’s behest, he instructs the Church and is no doubt directing the guardian angels in a quite intimate manner.

Judging the secrets of men is manifested by Jesus’ attribute of a penetrating gaze. His eyes like “a flame of fire” can read our innermost feelings and thoughts, which are also open to God (Rev. 1:14).

Rom. 2:17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

For the Jewish Christians to “rest” in the Law means that they were overconfident and that they boasted over the Gentile Christians in one way or another—by conduct, inference, or words. One can boast and feel superior inwardly as well as outwardly.

As a principle, we should not shut out everyone who does not measure up to our mental standards. One with less light might walk up to a higher standard. We should favor the one who *obeys* up to the amount of knowledge he has—regardless of what amount that is. We should favor one who is conscientious, not one with a lot of knowledge who is complacent.

Rom. 2:18 And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;

The Jewish Christians knew God’s will and approved the things that were “more excellent, being instructed out of the law.” Feeling that they were familiar with God’s Law, they assumed the posture of a teacher when dealing with the Gentiles. Of course Gentile Christians were at a disadvantage from the standpoint of the Law, but the teachings of the Jewish Christians could be at considerable variance with the true teachings of the Law.

Paul thought very highly of the characteristic of trying to know and do God’s will. The quality of having that hunger was superior to just having more information at one’s fingertips.

Rom. 2:19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which

are in darkness,

Rom. 2:20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

Jesus voiced this principle with the scribes and the Pharisees: “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matt. 15:14). The Christian Jews were confident they were “a guide of the blind, a light of them [Gentile Christians] which are in darkness.” What a superior attitude! They took pleasure in enlightening others, feeling that they were “an instructor of the foolish” Gentile Christians, “a teacher of babes.”

Instead of concentrating on the nominal Church as babes, we should look at ourselves, for many of the same problems can occur in our midst. Inspection should start with oneself and those immediate to us, and then go a little further out and still further out. The lesson is usually at home. We are living in the Laodicean period, and the Laodicean church embraces both the nominal Church and the Truth movement. All are part of the Laodicean church—the sincere and consecrated true Church, the consecrated in the nominal Church, and in a secondary sense, the tares, who never dedicated themselves to God or Christ.

Rom. 2:21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

Verse 21 shows the penetrating thinking of Paul. The Lord must have specially chosen the individual in the ecclesia at Rome to read this letter initially, for to read in a monotone would vitiate its power. To the contrary, reading this epistle with understanding and inflection would help the hearer to better understand its theme and contents. Then, as one got interested in what he was hearing, he would ask for a copy to read and study for himself, the principle being, “he that hath an ear, let him hear” (Rev. 2:7). “It is given unto you [the class with hearing ears] to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 13:11). And again, “If ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come” (Isa. 21:12).

Rom. 2:22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

Rom. 2:23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

Rom. 2:24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

Since Paul was speaking exclusively to the Jews in these verses, some have trouble seeing this epistle as consisting of instructions for all Christians at Rome. However, Paul’s initial intent was to write to both Jew and Gentile, as stated in Romans 1:7. The Gentiles were in a better position to receive education, for it is harder to talk with those who have prejudiced minds with regard to truth.

By using a question format in verses 22 and 23, Paul did not give a carte blanche condemnation of the Jewish Christians. For those who were guilty, these searching questions raised their consciousness in regard to the problem. God is no respecter of persons, but He is a respecter of deeds, that is, whether or not one is honoring God.

As written in the Old Testament, the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles through the hypocrisy and disobedience of the Jews (2 Sam. 12:14; Ezek. 36:20). Even as exiles

in Babylonian captivity, they brought a reproach on the name of God, for to travel from Egypt to Lebanon, people had to go through the barren ruins of the uninhabited land of Israel, which reminded them that a curse had come upon the Israelites because of disobedience. The heathen recognized the punishment as a curse because the Jewish prophets had warned of judgments to come. Thus the heathen said that the God of Israel was displeased with the nation.

In verses 17-24, Paul gave a strong message to those Jews who confidently boasted in the Law and wanted to lead others because they had a better understanding of God. That was fine—but *only if they remained humble and obedient!* Before instructing others, they had to be sure they themselves were obedient to righteousness. Paul did not downgrade the Jew for his background and knowledge. Pride and a lack of obedience were the problem. *God* chose the Jews, and not vice versa. Therefore, they should be grateful and not boast of their relationship.

Rom. 2:25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

Rom. 2:26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

Rom. 2:27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

Paul continued his powerful reasoning. We can imagine the healthy effect this epistle would have had when it was circulated, even if it caused division. The Lord does not want hypocrites, so for any who were offended, that was their problem.

Comment: Even the unconverted Jew could not argue with this logic.

Reply: That is true, for much of Paul's reasoning was common sense. He was saying in effect, "Does not common sense teach you this? Does not common sense teach you that?"

"For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law." In using these arguments, Paul was saying, "I am not against the Law of Moses. I find fault not with the Law but with those who profess a high regard for Moses and the Law, yet by their conduct conspicuously differ from the precepts of that Law. By their actions, those Jews become blasphemers of God's Law."

Such importance was attached to the rite of circumcision that the Jewish Christians no doubt asked the Gentiles, "Has that rite been performed on your men?" If the answer was no, then the Jews, who were confident in the Law, gave sermons on the necessity of circumcision for salvation. Circumcision was considered a mark that one was for God. However, Paul reasoned that circumcision was ceremonial. Sometimes traditions and ceremonies are profitable in assisting in understanding, but that is not true when they lead to high-mindedness and feelings of superiority or self-righteousness. Meanwhile, the Gentiles were doing everything to please God as they understood His Word.

Q: Wouldn't the Gentiles naturally gravitate toward the Jews because Jesus was a Jew who came to the nation of Israel first?

A: Yes, but anyone who wanted knowledge had to be very careful he did not get man's version of the Law rather than statements of the Law itself. The Talmud and other books are automatically equated as equal to the Law of God. Thus traditions, written by Jewish sages, are wrongly considered a valid part of the Law of Moses. Similarly in the Roman Catholic faith, the ceremonial aspect seems to prevail. The doctrines of the Catholic Church, the pope's teachings,

are regarded as equal to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. This type of reasoning is quite pervasive in the Western world.

Rom. 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

Rom. 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

For one to be a true spiritual Israelite is commendable. There is *true natural* Israel, and there is *true spiritual* Israel. There is *nominal natural* Israel, and there is *nominal spiritual* Israel. To be approved of God, “a Jew ... is one inwardly,” in “the heart, [and] in the spirit.”

Comment: With such a clearly stated principle of being a true spiritual Israelite, it is surprising there is such a blockage on the minds of many Christians when they read chapter 7 of the Book of Revelation. Verses 5-8 list 12,000 of the Little Flock for each of the 12 *spiritual* tribes of Israel, which consist of *both* Jews and Gentiles.

In many of these reasonings, a word is frequently used that may not be clear in our English translation of the Greek. For example, Paul said that a Jew “is one inwardly” and that true circumcision is “of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the *letter* [only],” yet we have to study the “*letter*” of the Word in order to get the spirit. A *superficial* knowledge of Scripture is different from a *spiritual* understanding of Scripture, but we have to hear the letter to get the spirit. Many say, “I know that I love God, and I try to please Him,” but then they put the Word aside and try to use their own reasoning as to what God’s will is. They do not desire instruction.

A true spiritual Israelite’s “praise is not of men, but of God.” A natural human desire is to be recognized by fellow man, but how much better it is to receive praise and recognition from God. The praise of men is superficial and can be very misleading. The one who *really* obeys receives praise from God; *outward* obedience is only to please men.

Q: Did Paul have a particular purpose in adding the clause “praise is not of men, but of God”?

A: Contention existed in the church in Rome, and Jewish Christians took the role of being teachers. As others listened to the instruction of these enlightened(?) Christians and became interested, they began to praise the instructors. However, they were teaching wrong doctrine. Some were amenable to the false, hypocritical teaching, and others resented it. Paul was trying to help both sides see the fundamental teachings of Scripture—the bottom line of the gospel of Jesus Christ—and not take the high road of intellect. Later on in this epistle, Paul used some superlative, inspirational thinking that is not in any of the other epistles.

Rom. 3:1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

“What advantage then hath the Jew?” Why did Paul start with this tone? He was quite severe with the Jewish Christians in the previous chapter, so now they needed some encouragement. He had accused them of being high-minded in their attitude and communication with the Gentile element in the ecclesia. He sensed their reaction, but they were not to take his strong words personally.

“Or what profit is there of circumcision?” Why did Paul phrase the question this way? He talked about circumcision in the previous chapter, saying that a true spiritual Israelite was circumcised inwardly, not outwardly. In addition, he said the ritual of outward circumcision was not that significant in itself, whereas the Jews were using it as a litmus test to show where

one stood in the truth. Many Christians down through the Gospel Age have used various tests to try to identify whether one is a heretic or a nonconformist from their view or standpoint.

Rom. 3:2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Jewish Christians had “much [advantage] every way,” chiefly because the oracles of God had been committed unto them. They had the Law and the testimony of the prophets, the prophetic writings, whereas the Gentiles had no understanding along that line. The problem was the *attitude or frame of mind* of those with this advantage. The Law is inherently good, but it is slanted a certain way, as will be discussed later.

Over the years, we have heard a few talks that present the Law as unprofitable and almost injurious for the Christian to study. Different Scriptures are used to try to negate the importance of the Law even from an informational standpoint, whereas a consideration of the Law is profitable for the Christian.

Rom. 3:3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

For one thing, the oracles of God and what Paul was teaching were the Word of God. “For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief [the unbelief of the Judaizing element] make the faith of God without effect?” When the Judaizing element reached not only Rome but Corinth, Galatia, and other ecclesias, quarrels and contentions were the result.

Paul was drawing lessons from the past and giving them a current value in his day. His subsequent argument shows that the *gospel of faith* was preached even in the Old Testament, but because the minds of the Jews were blinded, they mentally discarded that teaching and kept thinking that one was justified by the Law. And even then, they felt their justification came more from the ceremonial aspects of the Law. Similarly, Roman Catholics think that going through the ceremony of praying to saints, paying for candles, attending Mass, and going to Confession will disannul their sins. But those rituals emphasize ceremonial *works* in contradistinction to *faith and loving God* with all one’s heart, mind, soul, and strength, which is the First Commandment. All of the commandments of the Mosaic Law were moral precepts except for the ceremony of observing the sabbath. The so-called Christian correspondence for that commandment is going to church, and for the Jew, it is going to the synagogue on holy days. Much more than ritual is required, for example, *obedience* to the moral code.

Rom. 3:4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

“God forbid” that the unbelief of some would make “the faith of God without effect” (verse 3). That would be an impossibility.

The very positive statement “Let God be true, but every man a liar” sounds like Joshua, who said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15). An example of positive decision making is when the Levites took a stand and obeyed Moses by killing their brethren who participated in the worship of the golden calf (Exod. 32:26-28). God appreciates a positive stand for righteousness and truth, and such a decision goes a long way toward meeting His approval. Decision making starts primarily with the will. The heart is the seat of *emotions*, the head is the *intellectual* aspect, and the reins (the kidneys, the “second heart”) picture the *will* or purpose. Although sometimes frustrated or inhibited by the weaknesses of the flesh, the will is the underlying factor.

“As it is written [in the Psalms], That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.” God can forgive transgressions *if* the proper steps are taken and *if*, in our heart, we hate the sins. Thus there is an arrangement in the gospel dispensation whereby our sins can be covered with Jesus’ righteousness.

Comment: Psalm 51:4 reads, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”

Justification and faith are primary themes of this epistle. If something that God permits to happen to us seems unjust, our thinking is wrong, for there is a lesson to be learned. Faith should say, “I do not understand, but I love the Lord and trust that what has occurred will ultimately be shown to be right.” God’s character and Word will be vindicated in due time. He is justified in His words and actions—whether or not we can fathom them.

Rom. 3:5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

“But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say?” As consecrated Christians, most of us have been reading God’s Word for many years. As we get older and more mature in the truth, we begin to see a little more clearly that there is still a lot of work to be done in us as individuals. We were very enthusiastic in the beginning, and thinking we could lick the world, we went out and told everyone we knew how wonderful the truth is. But then we sobered up and realized that our characters needed work. We know that God’s Word is true, and as we try to obey the instructions contained therein to the best of our ability, our new-creature mind can see where we need improvement.

Paul said of his statement in verse 5, “I speak as a man.” In verse 10 of this same chapter, Paul said, “There is none righteous [according to the flesh], no, not one.” Many in the world, as well as in the nominal Church—and certainly in the true Church too—can see the inappropriateness of certain sins that are obviously heinous and repulsive. Some of those sins were mentioned in the first chapter, and Paul was still speaking on the same theme. He was saying in effect, “I speak as a man. God is not cruel or unjust when He visits judgments. There is a reason for the present condemnation of the human race.” While we can understand that all are guilty before God, even the natural man should understand that point. Many say that society is becoming degenerate. Some making this statement are not consecrated Christians but are people with noble ideas who recognize the degradation in advertising, the media, etc. Therefore, from man’s standpoint, *everyone* should stand and listen to what God is saying through the Apostle Paul on this subject matter.

If man in his fallen state can appreciate to some extent God’s goodness, is it any wonder He will take vengeance? His vengeance is just, for conscience and the light of nature make mankind culpable. God’s character will prevail in the judgment.

Rom. 3:6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

Rom. 3:7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

Rom. 3:8 And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

In hearing the gospel of forgiveness versus the concept of obeying God through the works of

the Law, Paul's enemies (the Judaizing element) thought of him as a libertine. They felt that he was much too far to the left in his thinking and that with such a gospel, a person could do anything he wanted and still be forgiven. By exaggerating the gospel of faith and giving this slant, they felt not only that Paul was dangerous but that he merited persecution. The thinking of such Jews, who felt they had the right concept and tried to enforce it, led to the persecution of Christians and even death. The accusation was that Paul was telling others they could do evil willfully and be forgiven. Certainly Paul's writings and teachings were otherwise. Some erroneously use Scripture to say that love covers a "multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8). Although that statement is true, it has to be considered in light of many other Scriptures in order to get a rounded-out, correct understanding of the subject.

"For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" Paul's gospel was purported to be a lie, but in effect, his ministry revealed the meaning of God's Word. "By thy words thou shalt be justified" is the principle (Matt. 12:37). Paul's ministry opened the minds of others to see the truth about God, His purposes, what pleases Him, what displeases Him, etc. Paul revealed to both Jew and Gentile the meaning and purpose of Scripture.

When something is purported to be a lie, anyone with common sense would first compare the words with the thinking of the one who was doing the criticizing. Sometimes an incongruity is seen right away. Certainly those who were trying to subvert Paul's ministry were not going into much detail about Jesus' gospel. If Paul's writings and preachings were honestly examined, the Jews should have noticed that in addition to teaching about Christ, he quoted a lot from the Old Testament and brought out things they had never seen before. A humble heart with an open, unprejudiced mind would perceive the distinction between one who is speaking truth and one who is speaking falsehood.

Paul was saying that everything he stated was based on the Word of God, both the Old and the New Testaments. Therefore, when he was criticized as being a liar, those who heard the criticism should have asked, "What did this accused liar say?" When they realized that from his lips came forth sweet, pure waters and good fruit, they would know the critics were lying. Paul was saying to the Romans, "In fairness, you should judge me by what I say, not by what you hear. Examine the content of my message to see whether or not it is sound."

"And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just." The affirmation of slander reminds us of the two false witnesses who accused Jesus at his trial. Paul was saying, "It is not just a general rumor but a specific slanderous accusation that is affirmed by others about my statements and the gospel I preach." Many are prejudiced by their own little minds. Our attitude should be *to wait and see* if there is an explanation.

Paul brought in his own experience. The Jews were judging him. They found fault with his doctrine as well as with him personally. They accused him of teaching that one should do evil so that good would come. And they called him dangerous because he told sinners they would be forgiven. In short, they *slandered* Paul.

One criticism was that Paul was too merciful. The Jews felt that one had to become a Jew first, that is, before he could become a Christian. They did not understand how sinners could be saved by faith. Hence they claimed Paul was condoning evil and sin.

Rom. 3:9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

Rom. 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Paul was speaking in broad terms. The lesson is that it is critical to examine the source of a rumor or information and then measure the conduct that ensues. For all the Jews' criticism of Paul, it could be seen that their deeds did not match their professions. Inherently, Paul was saying, "I am a mortal, a human being, just like everyone else." Similarly, when the people of Lystra regarded Barnabas and Paul as gods, calling them Jupiter and Mercury, respectively, they reprimanded the people, saying, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you" (Acts 14:11-18).

From that standpoint, Paul admitted he was not a supernatural being and said, "Consider the message I preach. No one, including me, is inherently righteous. I am not greater than you but am like you from the human standpoint. The gospel I preach of justification by faith is what is important. I am not high-minded. I am just preaching about Jesus Christ." Incidentally, habit of thought is different from extraneous, intermittent, ephemeral thoughts. We must fight against wrong thoughts that start to linger.

Verses 10-18 are a strong condemnation of all mankind. Jews and Gentiles are condemned in sin unless they accept Christ. Hence, as new creatures, none can point a finger at another. In addition, Paul's lesson to the Jewish Christians was that ceremonial works are superficial and do not lead to real faith.

Rom. 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Rom. 3:12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Rom. 3:13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

Rom. 3:14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

Rom. 3:15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:

Rom. 3:16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:

Rom. 3:17 And the way of peace have they not known:

Rom. 3:18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Now Paul was talking particularly about his opponents, the Judaizing element, although the comments are also true of mankind in general. Their throat is an "open sepulchre" for several reasons. (1) They speak deceit, hypocrisy, lies, and misrepresentations, saying one thing and meaning another, and thus leading astray the listener. (2) The poison of snakes is under their lips; they intend to wound and kill with their words. (3) Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Those who are led by such individuals, whose motive is destruction, get nothing but death. The mouth of the leaders is like a yawning grave.

Paul's strong words remind us of Jesus' calling the scribes and Pharisees "hypocrites" and "whited sepulchres" (Matt. 23:27). Prevailing conditions in society were corrupt for Paul to use such powerful language. Obviously, the conduct and character of this Judaizing element could be easily seen.

Paul, who claimed to be a minister of Jesus Christ, said that all stand condemned before God. As he would subsequently show, the gospel is the only hope of liberty, salvation, and life in the full sense. Everyone needs to be humble and to listen intently to the instruction of the Maker.

Comment: Verse 18 seems to be the crux of the matter. Because they did not fear God, they felt they could do all of these things.

Reply: Yes, mankind's ways are *destruction and misery* because they do not fear God. Not only does this epistle reveal the condition of the unconsecrated, but the lesson to the consecrated is to root out the old leaven such as malice and envy.

Rom. 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

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

Rom. 3:21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

“But now the righteousness of God without [*apart from*] the law is manifested, being witnessed by [in] the law and the prophets.” Paul was saying, “In the Law, yet apart from the Law, is the prediction of this new message—that there is another way, a new way.” Paul would enlarge upon and develop the theme that the gospel was prophesied in the Law. Even at the time the Law was in effect, God dealt with certain individuals in a different manner than the general populace because they believed in Him, but generally speaking, no one is looking for God. In studying the Old Testament, we see that only a decided minority—the holy prophets, certain priests, and a few kings—searched out God. The books of Kings and Chronicles tell of only two or three good kings out of a whole list.

With the Law being given to the nation of Israel, a Jew in the proper heart condition should realize that mankind has fallen and that even the Jew is a sinner. Moreover, as the Gentile hears what God's Word teaches, he, too, should realize he is a sinner. Thus the Law is a schoolmaster to bring *all* to Christ, to make *all* see their need of him. Jesus is *the* door, *the* hope for the sinner.

Rom. 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

“The righteousness of God ... is by [the] faith of Jesus Christ.” Upon all who believe, “there is no difference [between Jew and Gentile].” With regard to the Jews, the Law promised everlasting life for obedience, but since no one could obey perfectly, all went into the grave. Therefore, no Jew could boast from that standpoint. As for the Gentiles, they did not have anything, so they were apart from God, condemned by conscience and nature. In addition to conscience and nature, the Jews were doubly condemned by the Law.

A primary theme of this epistle, emphasized again and again, is *faith*. True justification comes by faith; the channel of hope and blessing is faith in Jesus. This doctrine of Christ was revealed in the Law and the prophets by means of *prophecy*. Hence what Paul taught was not new. The just shall live *all their life* by faith in God's providences—in their trials and *in every circumstance!*

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

Paul now laid this statement as a basis of the need for a way out—for the Law did not justify anyone, and there was no other justification except by Jesus Christ. Generally speaking, the Jews looked upon Jesus as a false Messiah, and the Gentiles hoped for life after death but had no Savior.

Rom. 3:24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Justification is a gift that we receive from God through Christ by faith. This gift comes by God's *grace*; it is not earned. Because the gospel turned westward and not eastward, we live in a more Christian part of the world—not because we deserve to do so but because of God's prerogative and providence.

One must accept Jesus and believe in him *fully* in order to receive justification. The Abrahamic Covenant became unconditional when Abraham left the country from which he came. He had to *exercise* faith, and so does the Christian in his walk throughout life.

Imagine being a minstrel or a person traveling from place to place bringing news of this one called Jesus Christ and his miraculous message. Paul had not yet gone into the real nitty-gritty of the subject, but he was saying that something unusual had happened to solve the dilemma of all having sinned and come short of the glory of God; namely, he was bringing a message of hope to both Jew and Gentile. He was saying in effect, "I have come to preach about Jesus Christ and what he said. You have heard a lot in the past, but I will declare a message about a new and living way. First, however, I wanted to show that we all stand condemned and come short of the glory of God in our own righteousness, which is as filthy rags." Paul would now proceed to tell about the "redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

Rom. 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

God sent forth His Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. News of Jesus' crucifixion was noised throughout the Jewish world. It was also known that Jesus had healed lepers, raised some from the dead, spoken wonderful words, etc., so the Jews had gotten the message that an innocent man had been unjustly crucified. However, they were not familiar with his message. Paul was saying, "It was that individual who died, and his death had a purpose, namely, to be a propitiation for the sins of mankind."

Some heathen religions taught the propitiation of sin through the slaying of live animals, which were supposed to appease the anger of the god they worshipped. Therefore, Paul would now speak in a logical way to appeal to reasoning minds about Jesus' dying for the remission of sins. He would show that there was something to this message by declaring Jesus' "righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

Jesus is the *channel* for receiving justification; he is the propitiatory, the Mercy Seat. Under the Law, typical atonement was effected by blood being sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. Now Paul was saying that Jesus is the means of atonement—that faith in his blood brings justification and forgiveness. This thought helped the Jews who knew about the Tabernacle arrangement.

Rom. 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Paul would declare "his righteousness: that he [God] might be just, and [yet] the justifier" of those who believe "in[to] Jesus." God was just because of the light of nature, man's conscience,

and the Law and the prophets, and now He was the Justifier by devising a way not to sacrifice justice yet to deal with sinners who come under the robe of Christ's righteousness.

Rom. 3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

In verse 27, Paul summarized what had just been said.

Chapters 1-3 are introductory. In chapter 4, Paul would begin to reason by telling what the Old Testament teaches. He would say in effect, "I did not write the Old Testament, for it has existed for hundreds of years. In what purports to be the Word of God is the message that Jesus brought and that I, as an apostle of Jesus, am preaching." First, however, he wanted to get everyone in a humble frame of mind by putting them on a common level. He reasoned, "After all, who are we and what are we? We are nothing unless God somehow provides a way of escape, and that way of escape is Jesus, whom I will preach."

Rom. 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Rom. 3:29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

Rom. 3:30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

Rom. 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Verses 28-31 set forth the premise that Paul would now try to prove. In his subsequent remarks, he would establish that, indeed, the message is from God. "It is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and [the] uncircumcision through faith." He wanted to bring Jews and Gentiles together by getting them to cease their hostility and prejudices against one another. First, he brought them down to a common level, and now he would show that there is a common gospel which is beneficial to both.

Comment: In verse 31, Paul was assuring the Jews, who were raised under the Law, that he was not making the Law void through faith but, rather, would establish it.

Reply: Yes, Paul was saying, "We will now present arguments to establish that what we are preaching does not conflict with the teachings of the Law in the Old Testament." His message was that one can please God by having faith in Him. Paul would then go into the subject of what that faith was.

When Paul repeatedly used God's name throughout his reasoning, he was saying in effect, "There is *one* God, the Creator, and His message is the real truth." All other gods are figments of the imagination." The Bible starts very specifically with Adam and Eve, whereas not only are other religions hazy and nebulous, but they begin much later. Paul would say, "All along God has had His Word, and the evidence is in front of us. Let us see and accept it."

Comment: Verse 31 is a good text to show that although Christians are not under the Law, they should study it.

Reply: Yes. Of course the ceremonial features of the Law are not to be followed because the

antitype has come, and the sacrifices represent Jesus and the Church. All down the Gospel Age, except in Paul's day, Christians did not have the understanding of truth that is available today. However, even with just fragments of Scripture, they had enough truth to make their calling and election sure. As intelligence, knowledge, and the availability of truth increase, the responsibility for the Christian to read God's Word in its entirety also increases.

Comment: Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). And he also said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

In verse 28, Paul was saying, "We conclude, then, that man is justified by *faith*." The Epistle to the Romans helped Martin Luther to understand the truth about justification. The slanderous report was that Paul was undermining faith in God, but that was not true. He upheld the Law of righteousness, for what he taught was in harmony with the Law in that it glorified God. Jesus said he came to fulfill, or magnify, the Law, and in verse 31 Paul said he did not "make void" the Law. Jesus' statements were utterly profound, but we need Paul's writings because they enlarge on what Jesus said so concisely.

Rom. 4:1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

How did works of the flesh apply to Abraham? The term "pertaining to the flesh" refers to circumcision, which chapter 4 will treat. The topic is justification, but Paul was addressing the Jewish element in the class, who had confidence in the flesh. They used circumcision as an indicator of whether or not one was a true believer, and of course almost all Jews were circumcised after birth as a perfunctory act. However, their making such a point about circumcision cast an inference on Gentiles, who, as a rule, were not circumcised. Gentiles were the uncircumcised in the ecclesia, and Jews, having this mark in their flesh, tried to indicate that to really be in the family, to be a bona fide member, one had to go through this ritual. Paul said, "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3). "For we are the circumcision [of the heart], which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh [in the *ritual* of circumcision]" (Phil. 3:3). The ritual of circumcision is not a true indicator, for it can be done perfunctorily.

God told Abraham to circumcise both himself and his son, for circumcision would be the sign of a covenant between them. "And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you" (Gen. 17:9-11). However, Abraham was justified by faith *prior to circumcision*. Paul tried to rub in this point because the Jews were so particular about the ritual of circumcision. Thus he showed their ignorance.

Rom. 4:2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

The thought is, "If Abraham were justified by works, he would glory in *himself* and not in God." Abraham would have had pride in what *he* had accomplished in leaving his land and people and sacrificing his home life in Ur of the Chaldees. The Law condemned anyone as imperfect if he could not keep all of its decrees. An infraction of one part of the Decalogue made a person guilty of all.

Rom. 4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him

for righteousness.

Paul quoted Genesis 15:6, “And he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and he [God] counted it to him for righteousness.” Since Abraham was not circumcised until a later chapter (Genesis 17), he was justified by faith and counted perfect while he was yet an uncircumcised man, yet the Jews kept hammering on the necessity for circumcision.

Comment: Genesis 15:5 reads, “And he [God] brought him [Abraham] forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he [God] said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” Abraham’s believing what God said about his offspring justified him.

Reply: Yes, his faith justified him. Paul was addressing the fact that the Jews made circumcision the line of demarcation rather than faith.

A ceremonial act, no matter what merit might be in it, is but a moment in time. A person’s *life* is what counts, for it means more than one act. Accordingly, consecration of the heart, which is the antitype of literal circumcision back there, is only the beginning of the way. Many think the act of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ brings salvation, but God requires *a life of believing into Christ* in the pursuit of keeping the initial act viable. Abraham did several things. Not only did he believe his seed would be like the stars of heaven when he had no posterity, but he left Ur of the Chaldees and sacrificed Isaac in principle. Thus one act was followed by another and another, leading up to the supreme sacrifice of his dearest son. Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead. “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: ... Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb. 11:17-19).

Even though Abraham’s works were great, God justified him by faith. Righteousness was “counted”—that is, imputed, credited, or reckoned—to Abraham because of his faith.

Rom. 4:4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

When one is employed, he gets wages that are *earned* and are not a gift. When a worker performs a duty, he receives a salary, whereas pure grace on God’s part makes the way possible for an individual to commune with Him, even though by nature, the individual is imperfect before the perfect God, who cannot tolerate iniquity. This new arrangement through Christ, which Paul was trying to introduce to the Jews, his fellow compatriots, was hinted at in the Old Testament. Certainly Gentiles wanted to hear Paul’s reasoning as well.

Rom. 4:5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

At first, verse 5 might seem confusing, but later Paul showed what he meant; namely, Abraham was justified before he was circumcised. Circumcision is very painful, especially for an adult. The Jews felt that performing the act showed one had some gumption, but it was only *one* act. If we could get into heaven by just dying, we might reason that it would be better to take cyanide and end our life rather than to wait and perhaps jeopardize our reward. Paul was showing how foolish it was to think that by performing a ceremonial act, which is considered a “work,” a person was good for the rest of his life. An indulgence is along the same line of erroneous thinking. If the Jews’ thinking were correct, then sooner or later the conversation with new Christians would come around to the question “Have you been circumcised?” What a hypocritical attitude, for the questioner would be looking for a fault! He would think, “We can convert the individual by getting him to perform the act of circumcision.” It would be like

saying, “I saved a soul,” whereas the attainment of a heavenly reward is based on a continuum of acts for the rest of one’s life.

In verse 5, then, Paul was saying, “To him that ... believeth on him [that is, on God and on Jesus as the one through whom justification comes] ... his faith is counted for righteousness.”

Rom. 4:6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,

Rom. 4:7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

Paul quoted another Old Testament Scripture to prove that faith can justify: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile” (Psa. 32:1,2). “Sin” and “transgression” *before consecration* are what God forgives and covers initially. “Blessed are they whose [past] iniquities are forgiven, and whose [past] sins are covered.” After consecration, the relationship is different. A person is not to think that now he can sin so that the grace of God will abound. Some falsely conclude that the statements of Psalm 32:1,2 apply to all sin, that the merit of Christ’s righteousness covers all sin. The Roman Catholic Church has reasoned this way in selling indulgences, teaching that the individual’s sins are thus covered. It is important to make a distinction between sins committed before consecration and sins committed after consecration, for various steps have to be taken in handling sins after consecration depending on the kind of sin and the degree of culpability. Incidentally, the word “covered” in verse 7 suggests the robe of Christ’s righteousness.

Through the epistle, Paul was coming as a stranger into a new area and telling the Romans things they had probably never heard before in depth. When thousands of Jews repented at Pentecost, Peter had merely shown that they had crucified the Messiah. He said, “You have crucified the very one whom the nation has been looking for” (Acts 2:36-38 paraphrase). Peter’s producing a sensation of guilt on the 3,000 and on the 5,000 led to their repentance and baptism, but when he said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,” he did not mean that was the end of the matter. He was saying they would have a *new beginning*. They were to believe *into* Jesus Christ, not just to believe that such an individual had lived and died.

Peter’s sermon produced consecrations en masse among Jews, who are hard to convince as a people. The Lord must have given *tremendous* speaking power to Peter and John in order to achieve such results and make the people feel convicted. And that is what Paul was doing in his letter to the Christians in Rome. He wanted both Jews and Gentiles to realize where they came from and what God had done for them, but henceforth they could not just do anything they felt like. He was saying, “You both came from darkness into light, so do not let picayune differences divide you. Faultfinding is thoroughly inappropriate.”

Paul used guile and wisdom in quoting Scripture, for the Jews revered Abraham and David. Earlier he used common-sense logic to show that nature and conscience condemn all men. Now he used Scripture to show the condemnation.

Rom. 4:8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Paul continued to talk about the initial deliverance of the Christian from sin, which is like coming from a dungeon. However, later in this epistle he had to correct a false view and say that once forgiven does not mean always forgiven. Many feel they can willfully sin after

consecration and still be freely forgiven through the grace of God. The flesh, the old man, the old heart, likes this thought, for the Christian can then have one foot in the world of pleasure and sin and the other foot in the world of insurance beyond the grave.

We are still considering just the opening remarks of Paul in this epistle. If he had ended his argument at this point, we would not have the complete picture.

Rom. 4:9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

Now Paul would go into the subject of when Abraham was justified by faith—that it was *before* the ceremonial act.

Rom. 4:10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

Rom. 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

This novel type of reasoning was very powerful. Although the Gentiles did not know much about Abraham and circumcision, they got their education by listening to what Paul was telling the Jews about the Old Testament. Thus the Gentiles were being briefed when this letter was read to the ecclesia in Rome. Who could say nay to this reasoning, for those Jews who were critical probably did not know the reasoning themselves? They would have checked the Scriptures, for certainly if Paul had misquoted, the errors would have been held against him. Therefore, he had to be very careful in his reasoning so that when the subject was investigated, the mouths of his critics would be muted, and the individuals could not gainsay him. Today we are favored with concordances and multiple translations, so we can quickly check Scriptures, but it took Christians in the early Church much longer to search them out.

Comment: Paul was not belittling circumcision in any way, for it had been commanded by God.

Reply: Paul called circumcision “a seal of the righteousness of the faith” that Abraham had *before* he was circumcised. The principle is the same when a statement is notarized. With the Jews, the “notarizing” occurred when an individual was circumcised in compliance with God’s wishes as required by the Law.

Comment: Just as the emphasis is on the “seal,” not on the document, so Paul’s emphasis was on *faith*, not on the ritual of circumcision.

Reply: Yes. Abraham received “the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.” The implication is that by the activities of his life, Abraham was a type, or an example, of the Jewish and the Gentile Christian.

Again Paul used powerful reasoning. To pose a question and then answer it is a good technique. Abraham’s being justified first, his being counted righteous *before* he was circumcised, shows that circumcision was merely a later *outward sign* of what had already taken place *inward, in the heart*. Hence circumcision without the proper heart condition was not what the Lord desired. From “Jewish” thinking, which requires the works of the Law and circumcision, Abraham would not have been justified but would have remained an ungodly Gentile. Paul was correcting such thinking.

Rom. 4:12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

Abraham was “the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham.” Although ignorant of the details of the Law with their limited understanding, Gentile Christians who heard Paul’s letter were probably delighted that his reasoning refuted the other thinking. They were now able to resist the pressure of the Jews—both converted Jews who had trouble realizing they were no longer under the Law and unbelieving Jews—who used the same type of arguments. Gentiles could now give a reason for their faith.

Rom. 4:13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

The promise given to Abraham not through the Law but “through the righteousness of faith” made him “the heir of the world.” God dealt with Abraham on the basis of his faith. Paul continued to drum on the importance of faith versus the ritual of circumcision under the Law. Sometimes reasoning has to be repetitive not merely to stop one momentarily in his tracks but also to pound the thoughts into his skull. Many of these Scriptures are saying the same thing but using slightly different wording.

Comment: The promise was given to Abraham and his seed before the introduction of the Law.

Reply: Yes. The Abrahamic Covenant preceded the Law by 430 years. This point is very important, for the newly presented chronology changes try to rebut this time feature. The reasoning is that the Israelites were in Egypt for 384 years, whereas of the 430 years, they were in Egypt for only 215 years based on two witnesses, a Scripture in the Old Testament and a Scripture in the New Testament (Gal. 3:17).

Since the Law did not come until 430 years after the Abrahamic Covenant, Paul used the same type of reasoning that he had used with circumcision. Righteousness was imputed to Abraham *before* he was circumcised. The Law of Moses did not exist when God gave the promise to Abraham. Thus the promise was according *to faith* and had nothing to do with the Law.

Q: How is Abraham the “heir of the world”?

A: God told Abraham, “Through thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22:17,18 paraphrase). This seed is the heirship. The blessing of the world is just another component part of the promise, but it is not the main point. In other words, restitution was not specially commended by Paul in Galatians when he said, “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). The emphasis was on the channel seed, for the Isaac seed is to be the channel of blessing. The gospel is not the blessing of the world but becoming the “heir” to the world, that is, to become kings and priests *with Jesus*. Reigning over the world is the *secondary* part of the Abrahamic promise. Because Abraham obeyed God, the “seed” will be of two kinds: as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the sea (Gen. 22:17; 26:4,5). God said that the seed would be multiplied exceedingly, so that it would not be “numbered for multitude,” but the *kind* of seed, either astral or terrestrial, is another perspective that is equally important (Gen. 16:10). Of the heavenly seed, Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5).

Rom. 4:14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

Rom. 4:15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

Paul used Middle Eastern type of reasoning, which is a little harder for us to understand, but it is thoroughly logical. If heirs came through works, then faith would be of no effect. *Faith* is the important ingredient, for nobody can perfectly keep the Law; the Law condemns. Instead of the Jews' insisting that Gentiles come under the Law, they were to *throw off* this yoke of bondage. The Jew was doubly condemned under (1) conscience and nature and (2) the Law.

The Jews were chiefly doing the condemning, but the Law had not come when all were condemned in Adam. Therefore, from the standpoint that the Law had not yet been given, there was no transgression, but there was transgression from the standpoint that all are condemned to die in Adam. Whether a person does good or does evil is relatively immaterial as far as what happened, for all in Adam die.

Thus Paul was introducing a new frame of thinking that was completely different from the accustomed training of Jewish people for many centuries under the Law. He said that if Abraham was not condemned by the Law because it did not yet exist, there was no transgression from that standpoint. The logic the Jews were using was not pertinent to their conclusions. In other words, they used reasoning that was not relevant to their argument. The fault lay with those Jews who used the Law and the ritual of circumcision to try to justify their thinking. Instead, and to the contrary, the Law and circumcision condemned their thinking.

Satan tries to outdo God. Since circumcision began with Abraham, Satan shortly afterward got those of heathen religions to cut and lacerate themselves, an example being Baal worship in Elijah's day (1 Kings 18:25-28).

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

Rom. 4:17 (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

As written, God said, "I have made thee a father of many nations." Right away the promise extends beyond the Jewish nation, for Abraham is the father of other nations and peoples. Elsewhere Paul used the argument that Abraham was not even really a Jew. Not until Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, did the Jewish nation begin, and his 12 children constituted the nation. Paul had already gone into enough information to make the Jews' heads swim, for he was using a new frame of reference. "Abraham ... is the father of us all."

"Therefore it [justification] is of faith, that it might be by grace." If justification came by works, the reward would be obligatory, not by grace (God's favor). By this new means of coming into God's presence by faith, God can justify all, both Jews and Gentiles. Faith is essential for grace. Stated another way, faith is the channel, instrument, pipe, or means for obtaining grace. God's grace is there for all, but faith must reach out to it. This "means" was prophesied in the Law.

"Before him [God] whom he [Abraham] believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." Here Paul used almost the same mechanics of language as his definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Rom. 4:18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

“Against hope,” Abraham “believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations.” While Abraham was in Haran, God called to mind what He had previously said to him in Ur of the Chaldees, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3). Abraham had to get to the land God would show him, but he stopped in Haran because his father, Terah, was ill. After Terah died, Abraham crossed the river Euphrates and entered the outer or peripheral area of Israel.

“Against hope [Abraham] believed in hope.” In other words, everything was to the contrary. In tracing Abraham’s experiences in getting to the land of Canaan, we can see the obstacles that confronted him. Even when he entered the land, which he believed God would give him in time, he had to buy a plot of ground for his burial and that of his family. God did give him Isaac, but Abraham had to wait a long time for his son. Since Sarah’s womb was barren for many years, she thought that perhaps the heir could be produced through Hagar, the concubine. (The concubine method was not unusual in those days, for the New Testament restriction for a man to be the husband of one wife was not in effect.) Ishmael was born as a result, but Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born later on. Evidently, Abraham was impotent, so again the situation was hope “against hope.” What a remarkable person he was to take these steps of faith, one after another! God uses the same procedure with us, leading us step by step to increase our faith.

Comment: It is also remarkable that Keturah became his wife after Sarah died and bore him more children.

Reply: Yes, Abraham had six children through Keturah.

Imagine being told that your seed will be like the stars of heaven in number and having only one son, Isaac! And then God told Abraham to kill Isaac. Talk about hope against hope! We feel that anyone who makes his calling and election sure will have severe trials that are similar in principle with hard decisions to make. Not everyone has that type of trial because not all are of Little Flock caliber. Some remain babes, and if steaks were given to babies, they would choke to death. At graduation stage, Abraham was willing to offer his son, whom he dearly loved.

It is important to distinguish between thorough dedication to God and the type of dedication a Muslim has to Allah, for instance. Muslims voluntarily die as suicide bombers because they are promised—in fact, guaranteed—an Edenic paradise for dying as a martyr. They detonate themselves through a fervor, whereas true consecration is a slow process, day by day, for the rest of one’s life, which includes much decision making. Worldly people may emotionally dive into a river to rescue a drowning swimmer, but sudden, hasty actions are not what the Scriptures mean by saying, “Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

Abraham’s faith that he would have a seed at 100 years of age was remarkable. He hoped against hope, and so do we, for circumstances in life seem to belie what we consecrate to do, but in this way, we are tested. Outward appearances may seem all contrary to our hope, but faith inspires us to proceed anyway.

Rom. 4:19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he

was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:

Rom. 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

Rom. 4:21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Paul's reasoning is very educational to us, let alone to the Jewish and Gentile Christians he was addressing. Abraham "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief," and the Abrahamic Covenant was a staggering promise. God had said, "Get thee unto a land that thou knowest not, and I will make of thee a great nation," yet Abraham lived and died without receiving that promise. Nevertheless, he believed the promise would be fulfilled, for if he believed Isaac would be raised from the dead, he certainly thought the same for himself.

"Being fully persuaded that, what he [God] had promised, he was able also to perform," Abraham "staggered not." Two extremes are mentioned. Hope against hope, he staggered not, being fully persuaded. Of course we can see some of these faith strains in our own Christian walk. All of us who have made a consecration—no matter how long that period of time has been up to the present day—have been living a life of faith because we burned bridges behind us. The consecrated cannot boast because of works, but in a sense they are like Abraham in their walk. However, the *degree* of the severity of the trials and testings is another matter, for God knows each individual and what his experience should be and whether he will be of the very elect in the final analysis. On the deathbed, some are given hope and some are not. We cannot judge by such appearances.

Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God. By his faith, not only did he give a testimony to God's truthfulness, but also it showed *God's wisdom* in selecting him. The same principle was illustrated when Jesus proved faithful on the Cross. Throughout eternity, all will ultimately realize that God's choice was best.

Rom. 4:22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

Faith "was imputed to him [Abraham] for righteousness." Paul was showing that Abraham is the father of the faithful. During the Christian dispensation also, Abraham is the example of a life of faith. Even if we are denied certain privileges in our consecration—for example, if a paralyzing sickness confines us to bed for years—we should have faith that we can make our calling and election sure. The statement "it was imputed to him for righteousness" was recorded not just for Abraham but for us too.

Faith in Jesus' sacrifice brings justification. We might have faith in a Creator, but to be justified in the present age, we must accept Jesus' sacrifice. Just as Abraham believed God, so the Christian must believe God and the one He sent: Jesus.

Rom. 4:23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

Rom. 4:24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

Comment: If we believe on God, who raised up Jesus from the dead, faith is also imputed to us for righteousness. Evangelists emphasize having faith in Jesus, but Paul took the matter to the higher level—believe in *the Father*.

Reply: That is true, for Jesus did not raise himself.

When Paul espoused this new doctrine and thinking—whether by letter or in person—others could see his fervor and dynamism. There was no doubt that he believed what he was preaching. Jesus was the Messiah, and he had been raised from death. It was necessary to have this energy of the Holy Spirit working in him so that others would realize he was thoroughly convinced, and when he faithfully went through repeated persecutions, people were convinced even more. Who could endure such experiences, one after another, unless he truly believed what he was saying? Paul was a *living* epistle, so when he spoke, his audience knew that he was convinced and that he must have had a vision from God. In addition, others knew of his infirmity. Going from house to house, preaching in synagogues, writing numerous epistles, walking long distances between destinations, etc., all required dedication and conviction. Seeing what this human dynamo was doing with the infirmities of the flesh that handicapped him caused people to listen to him.

Some were still alive who had seen Jesus and the Crucifixion. They could testify that the Innocent One had healed people of leprosy, cast out demons, raised some from death, spoken like no other man, etc. Moreover, some could testify about the signs that took place at Pentecost, such as speaking with tongues. Thus, when Paul's hearers investigated what he was saying, there was evidence of the truthfulness of his words. And when he laid his hands on believers, a gift of the Holy Spirit was instantaneously imparted. All these evidences buttressed what Paul said. (Of course for us today, the evidence in this epistle is the Old Testament.)

Rom. 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Jesus “was delivered for our offences [for our sins], and was raised again for our justification.” His dying on the Cross was an offset for sin, for he had to take the sinner's place. When raised, he was in a new role as a *living, risen* Savior. Some still living gave eyewitness testimony that Jesus had been raised from death, for they saw him after his crucifixion. The fact the scribes and Pharisees of the first century could not disannul the historical events and occurrences in nature, as recorded in the four Gospels, is proof that they occurred.

Rom. 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Paul would probably have addressed this epistle differently if the brethren were new and did not understand about Jesus Christ and know the gospel. Therefore, he was writing not to help beget children of faith in God but to settle the differences that existed among the consecrated in the ecclesia. Hoping to resolve the continuing bickering and irritation between Gentile and Jewish converts, he addressed the situation in an effort to bring peace in the ecclesia, as well as further knowledge. As babes, the brethren needed a deeper understanding of the principles of God and faith as one of the first steps. In later chapters, Paul would go in another direction.

The clause “Therefore being justified by faith” shows that Paul assumed the majority of the class were consecrated. He continued, “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Preceding this verse, Paul showed that this faith, which brings peace, should knit together Jewish and Gentile Christians, for there was the *one* hope in the high calling. The word “therefore” is a connecting word, showing that Paul was referring to his discussion in the previous chapter. He was summing up and using the summation as an introduction to a greater depth of understanding. Peace with God comes through the Lord Jesus Christ—not through the Law but apart from the Law.

Rom. 5:2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice

in hope of the glory of God.

The consecrated “have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in [the] hope of the glory of God.” The “hope of the glory of God” is seeing God, being in His presence, and being with Jesus, as well as receiving the divine nature. To see God as He is in any depth, one would need His nature as well. Angels are in God’s presence—as spirit beings, they do behold Him—but the divine nature is a superlative additive. Thus having the glory of God would mean having not only His fellowship but also intimate communion with Jesus.

Faith and grace go together. Justification leads to, or is a means to, God’s grace, which is the next step, namely, the *hope* of attaining to the divine presence and nature. The realization that we can approach God through Christ should be a *source of joy*—knowing that we can consecrate and have a hope for the *future* and also that we can rejoice in the tribulations of the *present life*. The trial itself, the proof of our faith, is more precious than gold. Successful overcoming produces joy because we realize that we are developing. Even the *opportunity* of the trial is more precious than gold, for a time is coming when we will no longer be able to suffer for Christ.

Rom. 5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

This epistle was written close to the time of Nero’s persecution of Christians. When the persecutions cascaded down on the brethren, many had to leave Rome and flee to other lands; others died. Verse 3 seems to be preparatory to these persecutions, giving the brethren a basis for assurance when the tribulations would come.

Paul was saying, “We glory in tribulations because we know that tribulation worketh patience.” Some persecutions occurred prior to Nero because the Gentiles in Rome were not too happy with the Jews. Not only was there the holocaust of AD 69-73, but much earlier, before Christ, an insurrection had occurred. The Romans were fed up with Israel at one time, and then tensions eased. Insurrections followed in AD 69-73 and again in AD 135. Thus an undercurrent of feeling against the Jews already existed, but the animosity became more flagrant, open, and profound under Nero.

Comment: The *Diaglott* says, “We triumph also in afflictions.” At the time we are going through the tribulations, they are usually grievous, but afterward comes “the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are [rightly] exercised thereby,” for we know that they help us to work out our salvation (Heb. 12:11).

“Tribulation worketh patience [patient endurance, Greek *hupomone*].” This statement is logical, for to endure tribulation means that we are suffering long, and hence are developing the qualities of long-suffering and patient endurance.

Comment: For “patience,” alternate translations have “steadfastness” (ASV), “perseverance” (NASB), “fortitude” (Montgomery), and “endurance” (Goodspeed).

Long-suffering and cheerful endurance are two types of patience, the latter being a higher development. Long-suffering leads to endurance. As the Apostle Peter said, “Add to your faith virtue [strength]” (2 Pet. 1:5). For example, we are to grow stronger in witnessing.

Rom. 5:4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

Rom. 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our

hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Comment: Verses 3-5 read as follows in the Revised Standard: “More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.”

Reply: That wording is a slight improvement above the King James.

Patient endurance does bring experience, and although not an exact synonym, character is experience. In other words, an experience rightly received results in character development.

The three cardinal virtues that Paul speaks of are faith, hope, and love, but here patient endurance and experience are inserted between faith and hope. Faith is the first requirement. Then tribulation produces patient endurance, patient endurance brings experience, experience results in hope, and hope does not make us ashamed. Having this hope in our heart, which is not reached in an instant, has the effect of not only broadening and strengthening character but also crystallizing it. As steel is hardened, so character is crystallized. It takes time for this hope to spread in the heart, the proof being the development of love. Even after the mark of perfect love is reached, we must stand fast, wearing the components of armor that are listed in Ephesians 6:11-17. The Apostle James said, “Let patience [patient endurance] have her perfect[ing] work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:4). With that “perfecting work” comes the process of crystallization of character. Stated succinctly, the sequence is faith, tribulation, patience, experience, hope, and love because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which He has given us.

Comment: For “experience,” alternate translations have “approval” (Alford), “tested character” (Williams), “strength of character” (TCNT), and “proof that we have stood the test” (NEB).

Hope leads to love. The sequence, or progression, is as follows: faith, long-suffering, patient endurance, experience (strength of character, character development), hope, and love. Elsewhere Paul put patient endurance even higher than love: “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and *having done all, to stand*” (Eph. 6:13). Paul was speaking of patient endurance under extreme trial, especially toward the end of our course.

Rom. 5:6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

When were we “yet without strength”? Whether Jew or Gentile, all were without strength before Christ died on the Cross. Jews with a good and honest heart should have been very frustrated because the knowledge of the Law brought the knowledge of sin, which should have made them aware of their shortcomings.

Comment: The *Diaglott* rendering is, “Besides we being yet helpless, Christ at the proper time, died in behalf of the ungodly.”

Reply: Yes, before Christ died on the Cross almost 2,000 years ago, all were helpless in their sins and without strength, and the only ones to receive strength and hope were those who subsequently personally accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and consecrated their all. Thus the entire world of mankind, with few exceptions, is still “without strength.”

“In due time Christ died for the ungodly [the world].” Even though a lot of noble, kind, generous, sympathetic people are in the world, “there is none righteous, no, not one” without

Christ's covering (Rom. 3:10). Therefore, prior to consecration, we were among the ungodly. In making a fine distinction, Paul said, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight" (Col. 1:21,22).

Among the ungodly are some whose minds chafe under the passions and lusts of the flesh and desires not related to God, but they do not know the way. In countries that have not had the benefit of the gospel, there would be many in this condition. The gospel was turned westward, but had it gone in the other direction, the 144,000 would have been found, generally speaking, among the Asians. The Western world was not any better than the Eastern world, but since the gospel went westward, a much greater proportion of people in the Western world who had unholy desires in their heart heard the calling and were drawn of God. Many in the world wish they could perform better but find they cannot. Without hearing the gospel, they have no way out and must live with this problem, or conflict, in the present life, unknowingly awaiting the Kingdom on earth.

Thus some of the unconsecrated are not in mental agreement with sin, and they see that sin is a basic form of depravity, yet they cannot perform righteously despite noble thoughts. Bro. Russell said the image of perfection that was on Adam was not entirely obliterated in his children. All have fallen short, but coming down through ages and dispensations, the human race has retained more or less of that image depending on the genetics from their forebears. In other words, there are differences in the marring of that image, but all have fallen short.

The phrase "in due time" tells us that God is a timekeeper. He has a plan that is precise, mathematical, and orderly. Certainly there are no emotional outbursts in His planning. His program was sorted out long in advance of its outworking.

Comment: Everything we receive is by grace.

Reply: Yes. God is like a potter, for He has the prerogative of taking any mud or clay and doing whatever He wants with it. We should never think there was any unfairness in His decision to favor the Western world. Similarly, He bypassed the angels who were obedient and sent the gospel down here. God has His reasons, some of which are disclosed in the Bible. If faithful, we will know a lot more of His reasons later. In the meantime, we should not question the Creator's motives.

Comment: For the most part, God calls the poor in spirit and the meek of this world so that no man can boast in his own presence.

Reply: Yes, and one reason for doing so is to humble the wise in the next age, when God will reward those whom He has chosen.

Jesus did not come down here to die instantly, for he *walked* the narrow way of death, *dying daily for 3 1/2 years*. He had to go through this experience in order to prove his love for the Father, and in turn, God's plan shows love (and wisdom) for Jesus, the Church, and the world. Incidentally, Christ died for the world in a *general* sense, for the "pearl," the Church, was more precious to him; that is, he bought the world to get the pearl (Matt. 13:45,46).

Rom. 5:7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

Rom. 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

It seems a little backward to contrast a righteous man with a good man, for the good man is presented more favorably. However, Paul had Jewish training, and in the rabbinical frame of mind, there were three different categories, or levels, of Jew. A just (or righteous) man was thought of as being fair but lacking the accompanying grace of benevolence, and a benevolent person, even though a scamp, was considered in a more favorable light.

Paul was playing on this thinking and saying in effect, “One will sometimes die for a just person in the world, but the act is a rarity. More would be willing to die for a good person who is a prominent leader. However, Christ died for all of us. God commended His love toward us “in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Jesus did not know the Christian personally. He died for those in the Gospel Age who respond to the opportunity that is presented to them when they hear the gospel. Such individuals take hold of Christ and are drawn like a magnet. While he died for all mankind—a truth that will be testified in due time—he died especially for the called of this age, who are likened to a pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45,46). Jesus died for the field, and he also died for the treasure hidden in the field (Matt. 13:44). Thus there are different gradations, but Paul was more concerned now with those who hear the call and lay hold on the opportunity of salvation in the present life. With regard to the call, Jesus said, “He that hath an ear [to hear], let him hear” (Rev. 2:7). He then made a distinction between hearing and hearkening. To “hear” shows a degree of interest and drawing toward God or Christ, whereas to “hearken” is to obey the call. It is submission. With regard to the world of mankind, all who come forth from the tomb will hear Jesus’ voice, but only those who hearken to that voice will get life.

Rom. 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

“While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood [that is, having submitted to Jesus like a subject to a King, a Savior, and a Redeemer who bought us], we shall be saved from wrath through him.” Submission is the next step after hearing. Paul was showing *degrees* of grace. To even hear the call shows some favor, for not all hear in the present life. For an individual to hear the call, which the Bible pictures as a miracle, means that God showed favor and drew him. Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44). As we take one step toward God, He takes one step toward us. The process continues proportionately until meeting and decision making occur (James 4:8). Of course the coming together is through Christ.

There is also justification by faith, but justification by Christ’s blood is more of a sealing. Peter said we should feel that we are a purchased possession. We were purchased at the *great cost* of Jesus’ dying on the Cross. Thus not only does Jesus’ blood justify us, but we should be moved to feel *the cost* that was involved.

“We shall be saved from wrath through him [Christ].” This statement does not mean “once saved, always saved.”

Rom. 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Verse 10 is encouraging. If God has done so much in order for us to be reconciled through the death of His Son, then *how much more* He is interested in those who have already taken the step of consecration. If God was interested in drawing some to Christ before they consecrated, *how much more* He is interested now that they have responded!

The provision or opportunity for salvation was made, and those who respond by yielding and submitting, thus becoming justified, are certainly much further on the path toward salvation than those who do not respond. Notice that Paul kept bringing in God and Jesus to show the relationship of the two.

Rom. 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

“By whom [Jesus] we have now received the atonement [the *at-one-ment*].” “Atonement” is a better word than “reconciliation,” which is used in some translations and incorrectly implies that we were once all right (that is, not among the ungodly), then we deflected, and now we are reconciled. God is the Author of atonement, and Jesus is the channel God provided. Therefore, we rejoice in God through Jesus, for *both* are involved in the atonement.

Rom. 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Now we are coming to the point Paul wanted to go into more deeply with the class in Rome. “Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” The death penalty came on the world because of Adam’s sin. “And so death passed upon all men [through inheritance].” Dying parents give birth to dying children, dying children grow up and give birth to more dying children, etc., so that “all have sinned.” The death gene was locked into man and then turned on when Adam sinned and God gave the instruction. “And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned [for all are sinners].”

Rom. 5:13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Verses 13-17 are parenthetical. Verse 13 is a complex and profound yet obscure statement. “For until the law sin was in the world.” In regard to the sin that came on the world before Moses, the attitude of the individual had no bearing whatever. All died because of Adam’s sin, not because of what they did. Mankind were dying to start with. Paul was saying, “Adam sinned, and his sin passed on to all of his posterity.”

“But sin is not imputed when there is no law.” All sinned from Adam up to the introduction of the Mosaic Law. In the first chapter, Paul said that all are guilty and liable to God’s justice because of the law of nature and conscience. Since none are righteous, God is not unrighteous in His judgment. Why, then, was Paul now saying that “sin is not imputed when there is no law”? We should try to understand his reasoning before proceeding.

All mankind die not because of individual sins but because of *Adam’s* sin. Adam was given a law and put on trial: “In the day that thou eatest thereof dying thou shalt die” (Gen. 2:17; see KJV margin). When Adam failed, the death sentence came on him and *all his children* through heredity. Therefore, the *judgment* of death on the human race came not because of sins committed in the time period from Adam to Moses but because of the law that was given to *Adam alone* and *his* sin. He reaped the penalty of disobedience. The death sentence came on the human family not because of *their* sins but because of *Adam’s* sin. Sin was not imputed to them, even though they were not righteous, or worthy of life. Incidentally, Paul was *not* saying that mankind could do whatever they pleased, and their wrong actions would not be counted as sin.

When God gave the Law to Moses at Mount Sinai, the Jewish nation made a vow of obedience

and thus became yoked to that covenant. Henceforth they were responsible for obeying the Mosaic Law in addition to being judged through Adam. Not being able to keep the Law perfectly, the Jews were doubly condemned. Of course God knew that imperfect man could not keep the perfect Law. Therefore, to redeem *all mankind*, Jesus had to redeem the Jews, who were condemned under the Law, as well as the entire race, Jew and Gentile, who were under the death penalty of Adam.

Jesus rendered perfect obedience and thus, in fulfilling the Law, had the right to human life. Had the Law not come, that right would not have been guaranteed in such a precise fashion. The divine economy is that God condemned the whole human race through *one* individual so that only *one* Savior needed to die to redeem Adam and his race. The Garden of Eden also shows divine economy in that the permission of evil will not have to be repeated on any other planet to be inhabited in the future. All future yet uncreated sentient beings, physical and spiritual, will be given perfect life and then informed of the permission of evil on earth and the outcome as an object lesson. Spirit beings are witnessing what is happening on earth, so if God should increase the spirit realm, they would also benefit from this one lesson down here.

Paul gave wonderful instruction partly because of his prior schooling. Who else among the apostles had such ability and depth of understanding? Now he was helping the Roman brethren to go further and not to remain babes. He wanted them to develop. First, he showed the importance of faith and commended them for taking the step of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, faith was just the starting gate. The combination of faith and tribulation produces patient endurance, and patience produces experience, which leads to hope. And when hope is shed abroad in the heart, it develops glorification and love—the objective.

All were condemned, but prior to the gospel dispensation, God could deal with individuals on the basis of friendship (not sonship). Examples are Enoch, Noah, and Abraham. The difference between Christians and individuals in the Jewish Age seems to be something like the following. We pray to God direct, and He can and does answer prayer—but the answer can be done by holy angels, who are given instructions as to what to do and what not to do on our behalf. Of course this reasoning is speculation, but, for example, when millions of people of the household of faith pray at mealtime three times a day, we do not think the prayers ascend into the divine presence direct, yet they would be noted—it would be seen which Christians are faithful in their prayer life. However, the holy angels would not exceed their authority. In any situation that is a little iffy, or when there is a danger of misreading how to handle a matter—that is, on matters which are not common sense to them—the angels would make sure at headquarters that everything is all right. The guardian angel, the angel in charge of the angels (plural) who minister to each of the consecrated, then hastens off to see what to do. Thus there are degrees of recognition. Sometimes God can deal through the Logos, as in the Garden of Eden, where Genesis 3:8 says that Adam and Eve “heard the voice [the Logos] of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and ... hid themselves.” The Scriptures teach, and the Pastor made the distinction, that Jesus is our Advocate, not our Mediator.

At any rate, God makes sure that those who are in His family are covered, and certain laws and principles have to be obeyed. The angels know what to do in many situations, the exception being where there are borderline issues. Some of our trials can be quite complex both to us and to those who see us.

Incidentally, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah never had the right to life. Therefore, God destroyed them for their exceeding sinfulness, and that destruction was in their best interest lest they become incorrigible in their wickedness. They will come forth from the tomb in the general resurrection with an *opportunity* for life conditional upon obedience.

Rom. 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses [because of Adam's transgression], even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.” Originally, God said to Adam, “In the day that thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt die,” but He did not say that subsequently (Gen. 2:17). Therefore, sin was in the world prior to the Mosaic Law, but it was not imputed when there was no law on every individual such as that which was on Adam. In other words, in verse 13, Paul was saying, “For until the [Mosaic] law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed [as it was with Adam] when there is no law [like that given to Adam].”

In a simple way on other occasions, we have tried to show with the burnt offering that the Law did not come until Moses. The burnt offering had different degrees of development. For 2,000 years or so, there was only one offering: a burnt offering. Then a peace offering was added. With the Law of Moses and commandments came at least ten kinds of offerings: burnt, peace, meal, heave, wave, thank, drink, consecration, etc. The point is that God did not set a commandment over every individual since Adam and say, “You are on trial, for in the day you do such and such, you will die,” for all have died anyway.

In other words, man sins whether or not he eats fruit; he sins because he was born a sinner. When the Law came, those who transgressed the Law were under condemnation (1) through Adam and (2) for disobeying even one of the commandments. Thus sins under the Law were *additional* sins. Prior to the Law, no such injunctions were given, yet death reigned because of genetics, the inheritance (or sentence) of death on the human race.

Adam “is the figure of him that was to come.” The perfect Adam, the father of the human race—that is, before he sinned—was a type of Christ, the Second Adam, the Father of the regenerated human race. If Adam is considered a type *after* his transgression, then he was a figure of Jesus in a *partial* sense. The sons of Adam *die*, whereas the sons of Jesus will have opportunity for *life* in the Kingdom. Jesus will be successful, even though a great many of the human race will go into everlasting death.

Rom. 5:15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

Rom. 5:16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

There is a distinction between verses 15 and 16. We use the illustration of a balance scale, showing that it takes a perfect man to redeem a perfect man. When Adam sinned, the whole human race suffered. With the one man Jesus, in contradistinction to the one man Adam back in Eden, “the grace of God, and the gift by [that] grace ... hath abounded unto many.”

In verse 15, Paul used a play on words in regard to the sinning of one man and the obedience of one man. Adam's disobedience resulted in the death of many, and Christ's obedience resulted in the saving of many. Through one man, many died. Through one man, many get the gift of grace.

Just as many were affected by the death of Adam as were affected by the death of Jesus, and thus all are guaranteed the opportunity to hear the plan of salvation. Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). All souls who come into this world must hear about Jesus sometime in their life and have an opportunity for salvation—if not in the present

life, then in the next age. One man, Adam, affects many; the other man, Jesus, affects many.

How will grace abound? Adam committed a *single* transgression, and *all* died as a result. All of Adam's children have sinned, yet Christ's *one* sacrifice compensates for *all* offenses—for Adam's *one* sin plus the sins of *all*, that is, for *many* transgressions. Therefore, the "free gift" is for the forgiveness of *many* offenses, in addition to the ransom price being paid.

In verse 16, Paul took the same reasoning of verse 15 but turned it around to show an additive. With regard to the condemnation of the human race, *one sin* of one man involved the whole race, but by the obedience of one man—by his one act, by that one gift of grace—*many sins* are forgiven. Thus, not merely does God offer the opportunity of life to man, but man has sinned many times, especially with knowledge, for with the Law came knowledge. Before the Law, men could sense condemnation, but they died whether or not they did good. After the Law, some sinned with different degrees of light, resulting in many offenses. Therefore, the "free gift" of grace *superabounds*, for many sins are forgiven under the new arrangement in Christ.

Rom. 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

In a vague way, verse 17 shows that in the present life, Jesus Christ is King and reigns over the sanctified believer. Instead of being under the condemnation of Adam with sin condemning the race en masse, *individuals* can have Christ and peace reigning over them in the present life *if* they realize their hope and consecrate.

Verse 17 is a picture of two kings; that is, earth's history is brought down to two kings: Adam and Jesus. With the human race as a whole, Adam and death *now* reign; Jesus and life *will* reign.

Paul's motivation was to show that Jews and Gentiles are equal before God in regard to the *method* for attaining justification, forgiveness, and life. The Law continually reminded the Jew that he could not get life. Jesus is the means to life.

Rom. 5:18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

Verses 18-21 are a review of verses 12-17. There are multiple comparisons: (1) two Adams, (2) obedience and disobedience, (3) sin and righteousness (or grace, the free gift), (4) a reign of sin and a reign of grace (or life), (5) sin and death versus grace and life, and (6) the many who *were* affected by sin versus the many who *will be* affected by grace.

While our Lord's ministry began at Jordan and was consummated on the Cross, it was not until he actually died that the wheels were set in motion because Jesus finished his sacrifice faithfully at that time. Just as Adam sinned in a moment by eating the forbidden fruit, so Jesus finished his course in a moment. However, if he had not been raised from death, there would have been another problem. If God had recognized Jesus' sacrifice right away, the human race would have sinned again and thus have come under condemnation again. Hence a *living* Savior was needed, so Jesus' resurrection became vital. The world needs both his death and his resurrection. When Jesus died faithfully, that was all he could do. After that, when God raised him from death, he became a *living* Savior, and the "free gift" comes "upon all men unto justification of life" in the present life who avail themselves of it and take the required steps.

With the omission of the supplied words "the free gift," the thought is a little more accurate: "The righteousness of one came upon all men unto justification of life." Righteousness, justification, and the opportunity of a new way opening are what comes upon all.

Rom. 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

We can see that Paul had mathematical understanding. The Pastor explained justification in a precise, profound, unique way in the *First Volume*. Others believed it by faith, reasoning that the Bible says Jesus died for us, so we are saved. Down through the Gospel Age, simple faith is all that was required, but at the present time, we are living in a day of education. With the availability of greater knowledge on the Scriptures, we become responsible for attaining it. Of course that does not mean God cannot call someone in Africa or in another part of the world where such opportunities for understanding are not available. Those individuals are not judged for deep knowledge the way we are in this country with plentiful Bibles, concordances, Volumes, and all kinds of study helps, as well as fellowship and meetings for communing together. Those who do not have such opportunities can still make their calling and election sure, for the consecrated are judged on, and responsible for, only what is available. A man is responsible according to what he hath (Matt. 25:29; Luke 19:26). Some have less advantage, even in our own country, perhaps because of a limited ability to think and reason or because of location. Therefore, a person is also judged according to what he is able to comprehend. Stated succinctly, we are judged according to our ability in making use of what is available.

Rom. 5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” A better expression would be, “Where sin abounded, grace superabounded.”

Comment: Paul seems to be saying there was no Law at first, but when the Law was given, the Jew had more guilt, so grace abounded more. When there was no Law, sin was not imputed, but once the Law came, more grace was needed because sin was imputed.

Reply: Yes, Paul reasoned that way with the Jews, but now, at the end of the Gospel Age, the reasoning goes further. Back there the Jew was trained under the Law, and the Gentile not only did not have any law but did not know Moses' Law at all. Today the Gentile is in a different situation, for the Bible is available almost everywhere in the world in the language of the people. Thus, because this knowledge is available to both Jews and Gentiles, superabounding grace is needed. The Law teaches about sin on various subjects, but people do not want to hear it, and the gospel itself is somewhat like a law. Therefore, the Law of Moses and the so-called law of Christ are both available. The Law of Moses consists of mandatory commandments, whereas Christians are judged according to their *own initiative*, their *wanting* to know more and to obey. Even though Christians are pictured as bond servants of Christ, they are judged on *how willingly* they are his or God's servants. Moreover, since the Law reveals the *degree* of sin, a repentant and forgiven Jew would (or should) appreciate God's grace even more.

Rom. 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul ended on an exalted theme, but the problem was that once he taught this wonderful grace, the tendency was to abuse the privilege and sin willfully with the assumption that forgiveness would follow. Even the consecrated sometimes overemphasize forgiveness to the point of carelessness in their walk and/or their spiritual detriment.

This difficult fifth chapter was designed for the Talmudic Jew.

Rom. 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Rom. 6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Rom. 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Comment: Verses 1 and 2 are a balancing statement for any who might misunderstand Paul's reasoning about not being under the Law to mean they can presume on God's grace.

Reply: Yes. Paul was not saying that all sin would be forgiven regardless of the circumstances. Therefore, he added the rhetorical question "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" What was his answer? "God forbid"!

Paul anticipated the thinking of the listeners, knowing they might have certain problems accepting his reasoning because of their Jewish background. Over and over again he satisfied the doubts and questions of the *honest* listener. Jews might think that without the Law Covenant, they could be careless and sin and still be under God's grace and receive forgiveness through Jesus. The danger was in thinking, "If we accept that our sins are forgiven by grace through Jesus, then we can sin again and again and receive forgiveness." No! "Once in grace, always in grace" follows this same line of thinking, as does the Catholic attitude of confession, sin, confession, etc. Note: *Willful* sins are involved here, whereas *unintentional* sins are forgiven.

"How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Baptism into Christ by immersion in water pictures our death, and technically speaking, a person who is dead can no longer sin. One of the chief symbols in our consecration is not merely baptism into the will of God, but baptism into the *death* of self-will and *being alive* to the will of God. We are to live as though we had been resurrected from the grave; we are to walk in newness of life. In verse 2, then, Paul exaggerated the situation, for a corpse cannot sin—and neither should we.

The tendency with some who hear the gospel of grace is to presume they have the liberty to indulge in sin, whereas Paul was speaking more of the times we are overtaken in a fault we did not intend to commit. The robe of Christ's righteousness is not for willful sin but for *unintentional* sin that overpowers us. Some of the slighter or lesser sins are clearly due to Adamic weakness. Other sins are perhaps 75 percent unintentional and 25 percent willful, or a 50-50 ratio. In addition, there is willful sin, which is not excusable but is punished depending on the degree of heinousness connected with it.

What about being "baptized into ... his [Jesus'] death"? When Jesus came at his First Advent and preached the gospel, incidents in his life showed his deadness to sin. His life was very unusual, and of course he remained single. Attempts were made to besmirch his character, but his life was exemplary. Not only was Jesus holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26), but he was dead to self-will, as evidenced when he prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus reasoned as a perfect man and even as an obedient Son, asking if he could be relieved of the trial, but nevertheless, he prayed, "*Thy will be done, not mine.*" Thus being baptized into Jesus' death is being *dead* to *self-will* and *alive* to the will of *God and Jesus Christ*.

We must not presume upon God's goodness and plan to sin willfully, as illustrated by the difference between Judas and Peter. Peter did not plot, or plan, to deny Jesus, whereas Judas, regardless of motive, continued to sin with the scribes and Pharisees. Also, Peter wept bitterly and repented, but Judas did not cry (Matt. 26:75). Peter was simply overtaken momentarily in a

weakness, even though he cursed and denied Jesus. Judas probably thought Jesus would escape and he would keep the silver, but he was wrong to plan and *premeditate*. David is another example of proper repentance, for his *public sin* received *public* repentance. For private sin, the asking of forgiveness and repentance can be done privately. In either case, it is important for the individual *to ask* for forgiveness.

When we are baptized into Jesus' death, we become *sacrificially* dead. Jesus takes away *the sin* of the world—Adamic sin—but there are also individual sins. In speaking of *sacrificial* death, he said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). Incidentally, the Seventh Day Adventists think that Jesus died for their sins *before* they came to him and that now they are under the Law and can keep it perfectly, especially the seventh-day sabbath.

In our consecration to the Lord, we say we want to do His will. We are measured by our heart intention and obedience to the best of our ability. The ideal is *not to sin*—period! Realistically, however, we have *unintentional* faults and shortcomings and make *unintentional* mistakes. The point is to get out of our minds the thought of *intentional sin*, which requires stripes. In putting aside the Law and coming into Christ, we still respect the Law and its character and principles, but since we cannot obey perfectly, we need the grace of God to cover our unintentional sins.

Rom. 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Paul applied the resurrection of Jesus to a person's baptism in water and his being *raised up* to walk in newness of life. Thus in one sense, the resurrection of the Christian is in the *present life* (in a *probationary* sense as a practicing minister), and in another sense, it is future (when one gets a degree as a minister, *if faithful*). The Christian is to *progressively* walk in newness of life.

"Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Why did Paul use the word "glory" instead of saying that Jesus was raised from the dead by the "power" of the Father? With regard to death and being raised from death, Paul gave Jesus as an example. At his baptism, Jesus was immersed in the river Jordan by John the Baptist. As he was raised from the water, "the heavens were opened unto him" (Matt. 3:16). When we consecrate, there is an attendant newness or freshness. It is not as though we were in the depths of despondency and despair and then were raised to *normalcy*, for with the death of self-will, all things begin to appear *new*. It is not like a person literally dying and then being awakened and feeling he and the world are the same, for the Lord rewards the consecrated with information and light, providing a *new perspective*. With regard to things that previously existed, the newly consecrated begin to look at them in a new light. A real *joy* is attached to not coming back to just a normal relief from the burden of sin. Therefore, *glory* seems to be attached to consecration. Many are so inspired that they think of witnessing to others, starting with their family and their closest friends and associates. There is no fear, *just joy*, as they do not even seem to count the cost but simply want others to see the beautiful truths. Only after a number of rejection experiences does the newness start to dull, so that we become more sober and serious.

This was the experience of Jesus. When the "heavens were opened" to him, the knowledge of his preexistence with the Father was the newness to him. His mind was flooded with his knowledge as the Logos, which was apparently locked out of his brain from infancy until his fullness of maturity as a man. To suddenly have this recall and light must have been an overwhelming experience. In addition, he heard God's voice approving him—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"—and the Spirit of God descended like a dove and

rested upon him (Matt. 3:16,17). Jesus would have immediately grasped the connection of the dove with Noah. Evidently, the preexistent knowledge was so great that Jesus felt compelled to go into isolation in the wilderness for 40 days without food or water.

Comment: When Jesus was in the Temple at age 12, he must have felt a special leading from God.

Reply: His brain was developing intellectually much more than that of an ordinary boy. By reasoning on what he had heard from his parents about the circumstances of his birth and early years, he would have known there was something special about him. For example, he knew his name had been given miraculously by the Holy Spirit.

Rom. 6:5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

Why did Paul use the word “planted”? The water in baptism symbolizes the earth. Rather than for someone to dig a pit, bury the baptismal candidate, and then hurriedly uncover him so that he does not expire, water becomes a convenient symbol of the grave. However, the usual procedure in planting is to dig a hole, insert the plant, press down and cover the roots, and use a little firmness to tamp the earth. Accordingly, the Christian is told to continually crucify the flesh. The flesh is like Dracula, and the only way to kill it and keep it hidden is to try to put a stake through the heart and pound it down. Even though the flesh is reckoned dead, it keeps rising up. The stronger the character of a person is in denying the lusts of the flesh, worldly reasoning, etc., the better. Like Paul, our attitude should be, “This one thing I do” (Phil. 3:13). He continually kept that thought in mind, whereas we have to remind ourselves repeatedly, for distractions of all kinds come along. And so the planting in death means to press down and cover the flesh, burying it as much as possible. Jesus was the ideal in every aspect of his life.

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” In proportion as we bury our fleshly aspirations in *death*, the new creature is planted in *life*. The pressing down of the old man is the pressing up of the new creature. Paul used a type of reasoning that was concise and to the point, yet his reasoning was so natural that we do not perceive he was an astute mathematician.

Comment: The opposite is also true. In proportion as we allow the flesh to arise, the new creature dies.

Q: Does the word “resurrection” in verse 5 refer to the present life or to beyond the veil?

A: The reference is to this life because the burying of the flesh is a continual process. The death of the will of the old creature and the renewing of the mind of the new creature both occur progressively in the present life.

We will be participants in Jesus’ resurrection if we are faithful in sacrificial death in the present life. We should diligently try to walk in the direction of the ideal, having the hope of being with Jesus. Faithfulness and obedience unto death will result in the reality of being with him beyond the veil.

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

Rom. 6:7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Verses 6 and 7 should be read together. A dead person cannot sin. Since there are neither works nor memory in the grave, a dead person cannot sin in thought, word, or deed (Eccl. 9:10). If the dead know not anything, they cannot be tempted to sin with the mind. Paul used very simple but forceful reasoning. Since we cannot be perfect like Jesus in the present life, God measures our success by our effort and our capability to keep our body under.

Comment: We strive to be dead to sin as Christ, the ideal, truly was. Only the Christian who is literally dead is “freed from [all] sin.”

Reply: Sacrificial death can be viewed two ways in the present life. In one picture, we are walking in newness of life. In the other picture, we are dying on the cross with the outward man perishing. While on this side of the veil, we have the promise, or the seed, of immortality, but we can lose that seed.

We can consider verses 5-7 as a unit. Verse 5 pertains to resurrection glory; verse 6 refers to sacrificial death, which takes place in the present life; and verse 7 speaks of actual death, when we will be literally free from sin. The Pastor said that if our consecration is truly bona fide, we could make our calling and election sure even without trials. Although he overstated the matter, Scriptures are also sometimes overstated to make us sit up and take notice.

Rom. 6:8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

A person who is honest knows to what extent he is trying to put the body under, and he knows that a battle is going on in his mind. God looks at the mind and the intent, but He knows we cannot perform perfectly because we were born in sin and “shapen in iniquity” (Psa. 51:5). However, He also knows how much we mean what we say. The Scriptures tell us that our words should be few, so we must be careful about boasting, exaggerating, and overstating ourselves from the reality (Eccl. 5:2). Otherwise, our words approach hypocrisy.

Rom. 6:9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

Jesus’ example was so exemplary that in tracing his life, we do not see any undue familiarity in conduct. Not only was he baptized unto death to self-will, but while being in the midst of sinners, he kept his distance so that there would be no suspicion of contamination.

Comment: The scribes and Pharisees could not have Jesus arrested and put to death for any ordinary crime because his conduct was perfect.

Reply: Similarly, it was said of Daniel, “We shall not find any occasion [fault] against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God” (Dan. 6:5). He was specially commended in the Book of Ezekiel for his righteousness (Ezek. 14:14,20).

Rom. 6:10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

In these early chapters in his letter to the Romans, Paul was characteristically repetitive in meaning, using slightly different wording. Verse 10 is an example. However, this kind of repetition is not vain. God Himself uses repetition as, for example, with the measurements and articles of furniture of the Tabernacle. An important principle is that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses is a thing established (2 Cor. 13:1). Keeping this principle in mind prevents us from fantasizing about what certain Scriptures might or might not mean. Substantive proof, either direct or indirect, is needed to show that we are on the right track.

Verse 10 refers to Jesus' death on the Cross. His baptism was unto death from a *mental* standpoint—with his mind and his will. However, his dying daily eventuated in his actual *physical* death. "For in that he [Jesus] died [a physical death on the Cross], he died unto [and for] sin once." Once Jesus was faithful unto death, his success was sealed, for he had earned the reward he was supposed to get.

Jesus died a sacrificial death once—as a sin offering—not for *his* sin but for *our* sin. Until he actually died on the Cross, there was always the possibility that he could sin, but his sacrifice was perfect.

Jesus died "once for all" (Heb. 10:10). With regard to the Christian, there is another way of saying this. Since the high calling is available only in the Gospel Age, it is a "once in a lifetime" opportunity.

When the Pastor taught there is no burning hell of torment, many nominal Christians thought he was undercutting God's right of judgment. However, he taught righteousness far more than the nominal Church. He did not just stress grace and forgiveness but taught that our consecration must be *earnest and sincere* and that we must guard what we *think, say, and do* and not obey the lusts of the flesh, the "Vow Unto the Lord" being an example. The nominal Church does not have as deep a concept of consecration. In contrast, present truth emphasizes the *highest standard* whether or not we live up to it in our Christian walk and doctrine.

Rom. 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In order to reckon ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God, we have to be strengthened and helped by the *risen* Lord, the High Priest of our profession. In antitype, he tends the wicks, trims off the carbon, and furnishes the oil for the lamps in the Holy. It is not only through the merit of Jesus' blood and righteousness—his robe—but also through the risen Lord's ministry to us as High Priest that we can be successful. If Jesus had remained dead, God's plan could not have ensued.

Rom. 6:12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

A powerful statement, verse 12 shows that we are involved in a fierce battle. We are not to let sin reign in our mortal body. Of course there are scriptural qualifications in regard to connubial relationships, but people basically marry because of the lust of the flesh. Jesus, who remained in the single state, is the ideal, and he certainly manifested this ideal in his life, works, and talk.

Rom. 6:13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

The ideal is that one should not yield to the fleshly mind and deeds unto sin, particularly as a new creature. "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive [or apart] from ... [death], and [yield] your [own body] members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The Christian should consider his past life a closed chapter. The new consecrated life is like coming out of the tomb and being God's instrument henceforth.

Rom. 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

The law of grace—the grace of the gospel—has certain rules, stipulations, and regulations, but it is not like the inflexible Law of Moses. Under the Law given to Israel, either one sinned or he did not sin. In the New Testament, one sins, but the Lord knows the nature of the sin and the circumstances, one's condition in life, and the degree of culpability or allowance. Repentance must precede forgiveness, and sometimes retribution of some kind precedes the declaration of repentance. For example, in regard to a sin against a fellow member of the body of Christ, Jesus said, "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent[s and asks for forgiveness], forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:3,4). There are also sins against one's neighbors, sins against God, and other kinds of sins that have to be soberly appraised and considered. The point is *not to let sin rule us*.

Rom. 6:15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Because of the importance of the principle, Paul repeated the rhetorical questions and the reasoning of verses 1 and 2 of this chapter. The Christian is not to sin willfully just because he is under grace and not under the Law.

Rom. 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Paul was stating common-sense logic. We are servants of the one to whom we yield ourselves to obey. Sin is a taskmaster unto death, whereas obedience to God is obedience unto righteousness. Sin can be a *way of life*, for such individuals *practice* sinful deeds, and sin is their *habit* of thought. If not stopped, even the most minor sins lead to greater and greater degrees of degradation, so that backtracking becomes more and more difficult.

Rom. 6:17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

"God be thanked, that ye were [formerly] the servants of sin, but [that] ye have [now] obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which [I, Paul, and the other apostles] ... [have] delivered [preached unto] you."

Rom. 6:18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

"Being then made free from [the practice of] sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Keeping the body under is keeping one's thoughts upward. The downward-upward motion is proportionate, and God is measuring it in each of us. The guardian angels who are watching us probably have a pretty good opinion as to the direction in which we are heading. However, they are afraid to make a judgment about eternal destiny, for God's unerring judgment is needed to know the degree of culpability.

Christians are called servants (Rev. 1:1). When servants are freed from an evil taskmaster and then become servants of a good master, one they love, the former condition is considered chafing bondage and an unbearable furnace of affliction. There is a vast difference between the two—not only between sin and righteousness but also between the devil as a father and the Heavenly Father (John 8:44).

Rom. 6:19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so

now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

Paul said, “I speak after the manner of men.” He was speaking common sense because of the “infirmity” of the flesh. “[In the past] ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity.” The old man previously sinned from “iniquity unto iniquity” in the following sense. If we sow a thought, we reap an act. If we sow an act, we reap a habit. If we sow a habit, we reap a character. If we sow a character, we reap a destiny. Thus iniquity is progressive.

Of course there are different types of sins, but here Paul was just calling a sin a sin. Then he mentioned righteousness. “Even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” The new creature, which has now risen, practices righteousness unto righteousness. As Christians, we are practicing physicians and ministers. As we try to please the Lord, He takes note of our efforts, which become a practice and a habit—and, hopefully, lead to a good destiny, to treasures in heaven that are incomparable to anything down here.

Rom. 6:20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

Q: Was Paul saying that righteousness is an accuser?

A: The Apostle John presented that thought, saying the Holy Spirit is not only a helper, an aid, to build one up but a reprover of wrongs (John 16:7,8).

Here Paul was saying, “When you were servants of sin, you had no desire for righteousness. You were oblivious to the opportunity of obtaining grace.”

Comment: Verse 18 states the matter one way, and verse 20 reverses or states the opposite. “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” “When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.”

Reply: Yes, Paul frequently used that type of reverse reasoning.

Rom. 6:21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

Before we were in Christ, most of us did things of which we are now ashamed. In the light of a new creature looking back at those acts, they seem heinous and abnormal. We are thankful for the new liberty in Christ, which took us out of our former bondage.

What about the “fruit” of sin? Today, to a certain extent, AIDS is the reward of sin. Sexually transmitted diseases are also contracted through sin. The end of the fruit of sin is death.

Comment: Billions of dollars are spent looking for a cure for AIDS, whereas the real solution—abstinence and nonaberrant behavior—is free.

Rom. 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Again we can see the mathematical counterbalancing that seemed to flow out of Paul in his reasoning. Of course it occurred under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Yes, Paul was trained at the feet of Gamaliel, but his dedication and the Holy Spirit entering his life had profound results (Acts 22:3). What invaluable assistance Paul’s counsel here has given Christians all down the Gospel Age!

Rom. 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul contrasted the “wages of sin” (*death*) with the “gift of God” through Jesus Christ (*eternal life*). One should be very appreciative of the opportunity for life.

Earlier Paul contrasted slavery and freedom; now he contrasted *earned wages* and an *unearned gift*. “The wages [earnings] of sin is death.” Other contrasts were sin and righteousness, and death and life. Paul went back and forth with the two conditions.

Under the Law:	Bondage, labor, death
Under grace:	Freedom, gift, life

Paul was using the type of reasoning that was practiced among the learned Greeks and those of the Sanhedrin. Hence much of what he said here would be above the heads of most Christians. This type of writing was intended for those who were schooled in higher logic.

No matter how long one is versed in the Volumes, Paul’s Epistle to the Romans is difficult to understand. Nevertheless, if we study the epistle and try to understand it, we will be rewarded for our efforts through the power of the Holy Spirit. Since there are different levels of ability and knowledge among the consecrated, ecclesias should not gear every study to newcomers, for *all* brethren have to be fed.

Rom. 7:1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

Rom. 7:2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

Rom. 7:3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

Why did the Apostle Paul go into this subject of marriage? His main purpose was to show that the principles which operate in regard to marriage apply to the Jew under the Law. Therefore, this reasoning was of more benefit to the Jew because the Gentile was never under the Law.

“The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth.” Paul wanted to draw the lesson that Jews, who were previously married to the Law, could change to Christ without violating God’s commandment. In verse 2, Paul likened the husband to the Law. A woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives, but if her husband is dead, she is loosed from that law. Verse 3 continues the reasoning. If, while her husband lives, the woman is married to another man, she is an adulteress, but if her husband is dead, she is free to marry another man. In other words, mixing the Law of Moses and Christianity is spiritual adultery. Stated another way, to remain under the Law while marrying another man (Christ) is adultery.

Paul was trying to explain how one can leave the Law and go on to grace through Jesus. A Jew under the Law has no right to put aside that Law and go to another religion. He is bound until death, *unless he is transferred to the new arrangement under Christ*. Stated another way, all Jews are still under the Law, unless they accept Christ.

Rom. 7:4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should

bring forth fruit unto God.

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

How did Jews “become dead to the law by the body of Christ”? What is portrayed in the lessons or symbolism of baptism? One who is baptized shares in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jews who became dead to the Law by the body of Christ could “be married to another,” that is, to Jesus.

Why did Paul then add, “Even to him who is raised from the dead”? Jesus is a *living* Savior. The Roman Catholic Church emphasizes Jesus either as a babe or on the Cross. A *resurrected* Jesus seems to be absent for the most part. Very little artwork portrays the raising of Jesus, and what exists is low-key.

“That we should bring forth fruit unto God.” Paul added this thought because fruitage under the Law was death, whereas spiritual fruitage in Christ leads to life. This thought is amplified in verse 5, which is paraphrased as follows: “For when we were in the flesh, the passions [or impulses] of sins under the Law worked in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.”

Comment: For “the motions of sins,” the Revised Standard Version has “our sinful passions.”

Jews become dead to the Law (the former condition) by being baptized (buried) into Christ’s death. Henceforth they walk in newness of life, and instead of bringing forth fruit unto unrighteousness and death under the Law, they are now able to bring forth fruit unto God under the new arrangement. To right-hearted Jews, the Law emphasized that they were sinful and imperfect; that is, the Law made them aware of sin.

In verse 5, Paul was saying, “The motions of sins, which were made manifest by the Law, worked in us to bring forth fruit unto death.” For the honest-hearted Jew, the Law aroused an awareness of his sinful nature. A sensitivity of the existence of sin was made apparent.

Rom. 7:6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

How is the Law dead? Not only did Jesus nail the Law to the Cross, but mixing justification by works and grace—amalgamating the two—was contrary to Scripture. Faith without works is a dead faith, but *faith justifies*, not the Law. Jesus’ nailing the Law to the Cross means that by faith, one has to be persuaded he is not literally under the Law but is under the grace of God through Jesus Christ. The two have to be kept separate and distinct. The Roman Catholic religion emphasizes ceremonial works as a form of justification—lighting candles, burning incense, using Rosary beads, etc. The Jews emphasize that deeds of the flesh do the justifying—acts of kindness, generosity, etc. As Christians, we should study the ceremonies of the Law from the standpoint of their *symbolism*.

Q: Does the term “being dead” refer to the Law or to the Jew who accepts Christ?

A: It works both ways. If Jews are dead to the Law, that Law is ineffectual to them. The Law remains operative to the Jew unless he becomes dead to it by accepting Christ. Consecration to death symbolizes the death of the individual. Jewish Christians “serve in *newness* of spirit, and not in the *oldness* of the letter” of the Law.

Rom. 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but

by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

The true Christian faces tuggings in different directions, and here is another danger. The nominal Christian world puts a priority on deeds by promoting a social gospel, such as giving to the poor. However, the Scriptures clearly teach that to obey is better than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22). Obedience includes the nitty-gritty details of Christian duty to God and to Christ.

Paul showed that the Law is not sin. We discussed the Catholic, the Jew, and the nominal Christian, and now we come to the danger to the true Christian with regard to the Law. What happened to the Galatians is one example. Generally speaking, they got mixed up because an outside influence tried to compel them to remarry the Law, to get back under the bondage of the Law.

Another danger for the true Christian is feeling that the Law is no longer important, so the Old Testament is not studied. Some say, "Just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are saved." Others add, "You need a little more. Just study Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and Paul's chapter on love, 1 Corinthians 13." It is thought that those chapters in the New Testament are the core of the gospel. However, not only do the principles of the Law need to be studied, but with at least two thirds of the Bible being the Old Testament, the fact should be self-evident that the Christian needs to study the *entire* Word of God, including Genesis to Malachi. Jesus said we are to live "by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). The very thickness of the Bible should tell us something. Often just backing off and looking at things as they are can awaken us to truths. For instance, many get immersed in all kinds of doctrinal details, but if we back off, common sense tells us that Satan is the god of this world. All of the various perspectives help us to mature in understanding the teachings of God's Word.

"Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law." Notice the pronoun "I." Romans is a little different from Paul's other epistles, and he intentionally chose that pronoun here. As a Jew, he used the expression "I," for it took the sharp edge off his argument as far as offending the feelings of the Jews he was addressing in the class. Paul was aggressively attacking the prejudice of the Christian Jews in their relationship with the Gentile Christians. For instance, if a person is giving a sermon about all kinds of wrongdoing and then inserts the pronoun "I," the tone is immediately softened. Otherwise, those listening ask, "Is he talking about me?" or "Is he speaking about Bro. X?" or "Is he condemning us as a group?" Paul was more interested in getting the truth across and letting the truth have a purging effect than in damaging its effect by giving any appearance of being hypercritical with regard to those he was addressing. Therefore, Paul's use of the pronoun "I" showed prudence, tact, and wisdom on his part. To personify the Jewish people in himself was an example of guile in the good sense. He was saying in effect, "Being a Jew, I am speaking for us as a people. I am one of you."

"For I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Paul broke down the negative aspect of the Law into two words: "sin" and "lust." In a more technical sense, sin is disobedience to the requirements of the Law. People sometimes go to great lengths to define sin, but sin is sin whether great or small. Then they go into the root meaning of the word, saying that sin is something off center with regard to God's will, thinking, or pleasure. Of course sin is an aberration, but the word "lust" covers the lust of the flesh, desiring the goods of others, coveting wealth, etc. When the two words "sin" and "lust" are used together, they seem to cover the whole gamut. Similarly, but from a constructive sense, Jesus said, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets," that is, on the law to God and on the law to one's fellow neighbor (Matt. 22:40). Jesus viewed the Law from a *constructive* sense, and Paul was treating the Law from a *destructive* sense.

Verses 7 and 8 present negative reasoning. The Law is not sin, but the Law helped honest-

hearted Jews to recognize sin in their own members. Paul's purpose in including so much repetition in this epistle was to unlock the blindness and the prejudice of the Jews.

Rom. 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

Paul personified himself as if he represented the Law. Sometimes we personify attributes by personages as, for example, using a woman to represent justice, and at times, we use corny expressions to illustrate deep, practical truths. Some sins are so closely associated that they are like brother and sister or two sisters or two brothers. Paul likened sin almost as if it were a separate entity: "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence."

"Concupiscence" is inordinate or unlawful lusts and desires. Paul used the same Greek word *epithumia* twice in verses 7 and 8, but the translators rendered it "lust" in verse 7 and "concupiscence" here. "Lust" is easier for us to understand.

"For without the law sin was dead." Paul was saying, "Is the Law sin? God forbid, for it has many good points. If it were not for the Law, we would be doing many things wrong because we would not understand what sin is. Therefore, the Law is educational." From the Christian standpoint, the Law should always be well thought of but in an educational sense, not in a bondage sense.

Comment: The Law brought a consciousness of sin.

"Without the Law" means "apart from the Law." The Law was not given until 1615 BC at the time of the Exodus, and it was subsequently pronounced in a more formal manner at Mount Sinai and given on tablets to Moses. Many other chapters in the Old Testament supplement the features of the Passover and the Ten Commandments, but prior to that time, there was scarcely any information. "Sin" would be things that are contrary to an inbred conscience, but some people do not have a tender conscience. They have either an uneducated conscience or a seared conscience. At least an uneducated conscience can develop, get understanding, and mature, but a seared conscience has gone against light. If the conscience is burned, it gets like dry leather and is no longer responsive. A wet shammy, which is smooth and soft, pictures a tender conscience, but when squeezed and allowed to dry, it becomes wrinkled and stiff like a seared or hardened conscience. For about 2,000 years, the Old Testament offerings were burnt offerings. After that the offerings were called either a burnt offering or a peace offering. With Moses and the Law came all kinds of offerings that showed details of God's thinking.

Paul was talking strong common sense but with tact, letting all the flack come on himself. That method was a nice way to approach the subject, but it did not dim his explanation of the situation that existed in the Roman ecclesia.

"For without the law sin was dead." Paul used this statement in a relative sense. He was saying, "People had many more liberties before the Law came, for if they did not know something was sin in its finer details, they were not culpable." However, what was true back there is not true today, when the old man or the old woman in us might reason this way: "Ignorance is bliss, so what I do not know will not hurt me. Therefore, I do not want to know too much because I would rather be willingly ignorant than culpable." But with Bibles being so plentiful today, ignorance is not an excuse. In other words, one is culpable to the *degree* of availability and his understanding and ability to understand. Before the Law came, God did not reveal much information. An exception was an outstanding individual like Enoch, who "walked with God" (Gen. 5:22). However, we do not know much about what he prophesied except for

verses 14 and 15 in Jude: “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” Based on what little is recorded in Scripture, we know that not much information was generally dispersed for the first 2,000 years, but when the Law was given, it was preached. Every seven years the Pentateuch was read, and the Israelites had to attend that *long* service.

Rom. 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

Paul continued to speak as though he represented the Jewish nation. He used two different perspectives: (1) he spoke as a representative of the nation, and (2) he spoke from a personal standpoint, using tact. When God speaks, His words are like silver refined seven times (Psa. 12:6). It is as if He has seven reasons for doing something. To understand even one reason is a blessing. Sometimes we can understand two reasons, and under extreme circumstances, perhaps we can understand three reasons—but what about the other four reasons? As God has said, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.... For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8,9). Jehovah’s statements are so profound that they can be understood only to a certain extent, based on factors such as the degree of the hearer’s capability and interest. Jesus said, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6). In other words, in proportion as one hungers and thirsts, he is fed and given drink, spiritually speaking. David had the proper attitude when he said, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119:97). And again, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God” (Psa. 42:1). We can learn wonderful, powerful lessons from nature. For example, a fawn runs and jumps, and with this exercise, it thirsts for a drink of water. David had that hunger and thirst, and he was blessed accordingly. He was actually wiser than Solomon because he chose the right path, whereas Solomon got diverted. Solomon had a lot of knowledge of earthly facts and nature—in fact, only Jesus was wiser in this category—but David kept within the parameters of belief and thus understood the deeper spiritual things that were available back there. The principle is, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith” (Rev. 2:7).

“But when the commandment [the Law] came, sin revived, and I died.” The problem is that we tend to read quickly and do not stop to consider and analyze what we have read. Although we might have remarkable memories, we get only a superficial understanding. If God’s Word is like silver purified seven times, we need to pause and reflect on what is being said.

Formerly, prior to the Law, Jews had more hope of getting life through the Abrahamic Covenant. When the Law was added, they could not keep it and found that their condition was more hopeless than previously. Paul was trying to appeal to the *honest* Jew.

There is another way of viewing this same matter. Before the Law, many Jews felt a measure of righteousness and were not aware of their need for forgiveness. The people generally did not realize the degree and depth of sin in fallen man, but the Law spelled out the conduct God accepts. The honest-hearted recognized the reality of the situation, whereas those who were not conscientious were deluded into false pride and a false sense of righteousness based on ceremony and outward ritual.

Rom. 7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

If perfectly obeyed, the Law would give life, but since man is imperfect, it was found “to be

unto death.” Stated another way, the Law, which was supposed to give life, actually brought death. As Jesus said to his apostles in Gethsemane, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41).

Rom. 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

Rom. 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Rom. 7:13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

The deception of the Law is that it promised life to those who could obey it, *but* since no one could perfectly obey, it brought death. The Law should have revealed to the honest-hearted Jews their *sin-sick* condition. They should have realized that they were still condemned and that a new arrangement had been provided through Jesus—“a new and living way” (Heb. 10:20). If hypocrisy and pride did not blind them, the Jews would see the new way.

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” Paul was not trying to deprecate the Law, but what one does with the Law—one’s attitude—becomes significant. Yes, as Paul stated positively, the Law is holy, just, and good, but what he, as a Jew, thought would be unto life, he found to be unto death. The fault was not in the Law but in the weakness of the flesh. In this seventh chapter, Paul showed in what manner the Law is helpful and in what manner it can be harmful, that is, if Christians draw the lesson that only by obeying the Law can one get life.

The moral precepts of the Law and some of the sacrifices, at least representatively, will be reinstated under the New (Law) Covenant in the Kingdom Age (Jer. 31:31; Ezek. 44:11; 46:24). Works will be important at that time.

Paul was leading to another point. “But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” Elsewhere Paul said, “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us [the Jews] unto Christ” (Gal. 3:24). The schoolmaster itself was unto death, but it revealed the need to look to another source for deliverance. One who was burdened under the Law would want to know a way out. The Old Testament saints were given additional information to the effect that they could please God by believing in Him, by having faith in Him. They did not know all the technicalities—for instance, they did not know the distinction between faith that brings one to fellowship with God and faith that brings one to sonship. In most cases, hindsight is better than foresight, for we are living way down here at the end of the Gospel Age. We have the benefit of history, literature, and illustrations to help us look back, but those who lived in Old Testament times had little to look forward to. For example, they worked 12 hours a day, from sunrise to sunset. In contrast, we have been wonderfully blessed with opportunities for growth and understanding, but what about obedience? We should keep in mind that Jesus’ message to the Laodicean period of the Church was mostly condemnatory.

One under the Law might try his best to obey perfectly, but he could not. Therefore, a distinction is to be made between the *deeds of the flesh* and the *will to do that which is right and good*. Even though one is under the Law, he may have that commendable desire, but he cannot perform perfectly because of the sin that is in him.

Rom. 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Rom. 7:15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

“The law is spiritual.” Much of the Law pertains to ceremonial aspects, but the sacrifices have a spiritual content. The Apostle Paul said, “Now all these things happened unto them [the Israelites] for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [Gospel Age] are come” (1 Cor. 10:11; compare Heb. 8:5; 10:1). The Law is “spiritual” when we see that it prefigures the experiences of the Christian. Of the things that are spiritual, some are good and some are not so good. For example, the murmurings of the Israelites in their desert wanderings and what they lusted after are spiritual from the standpoint of *what not to do*, and when Joshua, Caleb, and Moses pleased God, their words and deeds are spiritual in that they teach us *what to do*. Moreover, the ceremonial aspects of the Law have symbolic lessons for the Christian.

Many instances are given in the Law to help with the understanding of principles. A perfect law can be written, but it cannot be fully understood unless examples are given. Consider how the Law mentions various circumstances where an ox gores a person. Did the ox show a previous tendency to meanness? Was the ox fenced in? There are perhaps a hundred commandments on what not to do, and we can read them and draw spiritual lessons that are very profitable. From that standpoint, the Law is spiritual, but one who is under the Law and is trying to obey it perfectly is under bondage. For example, an Orthodox Jew will not push an elevator button on the sabbath. If he is on the ground floor and wants to go up to his fifth-floor apartment, he waits for the door to open automatically and then for the elevator to automatically go to each floor. At the desired floor, he gets out, but we wonder how he opens his apartment door. There are a lot of vagaries and inconsistencies.

In summary, the law is spiritual because of the perspective in which we view it. In other words, when we study the Law, we do not have to get a Passover lamb and perform the entire ritual, putting blood on the lintel and doorposts, etc. However, we are greatly benefited by studying Leviticus 8, 9, and 16 because the animals being sacrificed represent Jesus, his Church, or the Great Company. And sometimes individuals represent the same thing or even a Second Death class. Thus the Law can be spiritually discerned. Similarly, Jesus said that his literal words were spirit because they are spiritually discerned: “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). A natural man reads the same words but does not understand them. Thus we look at the Law spiritually. The Law is educational, for it gives *God’s* thinking.

As Christians, we often express the thoughts of verse 15: “That which I [would] do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.” This jargon rings true with regard to our experiences, for the flesh sometimes falters in weakness. However, our effort, our persistency, is what counts—the consistency with which we mend our ways and our path. The Lord is discerning as to whether we mean the good that we would do—whether it is a real and true sentiment.

Paul said, “I am carnal, sold under sin,” yet he was in Christ and no longer carnal. He also said, “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:16). The point is that in verse 14, Paul was personifying the Jew who was apart from God—the Jew who possessed the Law but found that the Law was a straitjacket. The conscientious Jew experienced frustrations, for his endeavors were fruitless in trying to get satisfaction and a feeling of being right with God. Therefore, when Paul said, “I am carnal,” he did not mean the statement in a personal way but in a symbolic way in regard to what he was representing in this drama. First, Paul presented himself as a Jew under the Law, and then he presented himself as a Christian Jew.

Comment: Verse 15 reads as follows in the Revised Standard: “I do not understand my own

actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.”

Reply: Motive is important. The motive can be one thing, and the deeds can be quite different.

Rom. 7:16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

Rom. 7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

“The law ... is good.” As Christians, we study the Law because we see that it is God’s thinking on different subjects, but we cannot observe it perfectly. We mentally view God’s Law as marvelous, and we can see that if we lived under it, we would express our condition as, “Sin ... dwelleth in me.” Stated another way, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6).

Comment: The Scriptures say that without the Law, we would not know sin.

Reply: The Law points to the fact that we are sinners. No one is righteous, but the unintentional sins of those in Christ are covered. As Christians, we have to keep in mind that not only were we once sinners but we still have the same body. Therefore, we have to be mindful of the proclivities of the flesh, even though, as new creatures, our sins are covered. We have this old nature, so when we study the Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments tell us if our thinking and reasoning are wrong.

Paul was now a new creature but in the old body. Mentally, he wanted to please and serve God, and he recognized when he was overtaken in a fault, for it was brought to his attention by providence, by the Word, or by someone’s calling attention to the impropriety. The new creature sees the exceeding deceitfulness of the old nature and heart and does not want to consent to those desires. God is looking for that desire and determination by the new creature.

The sin is distinguished from the sinner when the mind does not consent to a wrong deed and desires to reform and do that which is pleasing to the Lord. Moreover, the distinction means there can be a dealing with that individual, but the dealing must be on the basis of the Christian dispensation and coming to God through Jesus.

Rom. 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Rom. 7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Rom. 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Paul was saying that if he was overtaken in a fault to which he did not consent, he asked for forgiveness through Jesus’ blood so that he would be cleansed. God watches to see if we daily wash our robe in the blood of the Lamb to keep it unspotted. A battle is continually going on.

Had we been able to observe the Apostle Paul, we probably would not have seen much that was wrong, for he was so dedicated. Hear his words to the Philippians. “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling.” “This one thing I do.” “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ ... for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.” (See Phil. 3:8,13,14.) Even though Paul’s faults were no doubt few, he must have had some that were observable, but his new-creature writing through the power of the Holy Spirit shows he was most unusual. Despite what he wrote here, he lived a very straitlaced life. He even said in effect, “Could anyone find fault with me when I was among you? I was my own keeper. Didn’t I visit you? Didn’t I pray for you?”

Didn't I cry for you in your presence?" (Compare 1 Thess. 2:5-12.)

In this seventh chapter, Paul first personified the Jew who did not like his condition under the Law. Then he personified the experiences and battles of the Jewish Christian, who was still a Jew according to the flesh but was now justified by faith because of the righteousness of Christ. In the continual spiritual warfare that goes on, Paul was an exemplary Christian.

Comment: With every one of us, as well as with Paul, undesirable thoughts momentarily fly through the head. Paul's soul was probably vexed by these thoughts, and he made a great effort to get rid of them.

Reply: Yes, such thoughts have been likened to birds. We cannot prevent them from flying over our heads, but the battle is to not let them take up residence and nest in our mind.

Rom. 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

Rom. 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

Rom. 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Evil is ever present, bringing to mind the sinful condition of man. We each have the old creature and the new creature. The new creature should be the will and the desire to please God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, but the old creature is the monkey on our backs. As prospective members of the Little Flock, we are being examined very closely in regard to our efforts to reprimand the old man, to crucify the flesh, and to always strive to live the new-creature life. We find ourselves in a contradiction, which has to be battled. In the final analysis, our *habit* of thought and our *habit* of deeds become the prevailing factor and are usually the indicator. A good tree brings forth good fruit, and a bad tree brings forth bad fruit, but since we have this mixed condition in the present life, some bad fruit—things that we say or do—can pop out once in a while. We hope that such faults are not indicative of the new creature, and that is where God is judging us. We “all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10). God appointed Christ to be our High Priest to inspect us and be our guardian in the present life. In addition, he is our Savior, Teacher, and Captain, etc.

“I find then a law [of sin], that, when I would do good, evil is ever present with me.” Paul brought out the contradiction of the new creature and the flesh. In this split condition in the Christian, each wars against the other.

Rom. 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Rom. 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Paul continued to personify the converted Jew. Verse 24 seems like doomsday—“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”—but verse 25 is the *victory* note. “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

While Paul *allegorically* placed himself as a representative of the typical Jew, he identified himself *personally* here. He was saying, “This contradiction has proved true in my own experience.” He admitted to the same circumstances that all Jews have. “If the Jew sticks to the Law, which condemns him, he will not be able to serve God. The new way is through Jesus.”

Paul was not saying that he let sin have its way. In the early Church, Gnostics were composed of two parties. One division very much liked Paul's writings, but they took the statement "I myself serve ... with the flesh the law of sin" as meaning that God winks at our evil deeds. They committed all kinds of immorality and lust, reasoning that when they became kings and priests, that experience would be valuable in dealing with mankind. They taught that since God is gracious, they could sin so that grace would abound. How nice to have one foot in hell, or vice, and the other foot in heaven, or virtue! Paul taught no such thing. He said that a Christian could be momentarily and unintentionally overtaken with the flesh in word or in deed, but there are *different degrees* of sin. Sin is sin, yes, but there are different levels. The Apostle John spoke of "sin[ning] a sin" (1 John 5:16,17). The sin is first in the mind, but to perform the sin in an *outward act* is sinning the sin of the mind. The new creature consents to the sin, allowing the old creature to pop out. If one continually sins the sin as a *habit*, the end is death.

Thus Paul recognized the difficulty of the Christian warfare, which is a fight of faith between the new creature and the old creature. However, Paul taught later on in this epistle, as well as in other epistles, that as one is growing in the truth, he should have more and more success. We are to examine ourselves and make sure that our faults become less and less of a problem.

The exclamation "O wretched man that I am!" can be viewed in two ways. We think Paul was referring to a Jew under the Law who wanted to serve God and had been trying to obey the commandments but still felt that something was lacking. An example is the rich young ruler, who said to Jesus, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" (Matt. 19:16-22). We question whether he obeyed perfectly, but he did live a moral life, doing good deeds and probably thinking of just the Ten Commandments. But actually, in the final analysis, while the ruler thought he was rendering perfect obedience, he coveted wealth. Jesus pointed out this sin by saying, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." Not being able to give up his possessions, the rich young ruler "went away sorrowful."

Before conversion to Christ, Paul, who was a sincere and dedicated Pharisee with honest intent, felt he loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. In stoning Stephen, he thought he was doing God a service. There was no impurity in his thinking or his will. The problem was that he did not understand the gospel, and he needed instruction. He had to be knocked off his feet in order to see the way. When Paul arose, he was a new man from then on. Peter had a similar experience. He fell grievously when he was overtaken in a fault and denied Jesus three times, but his repentance was a giant step. Jesus said in advance, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren"; that is, Peter was then able to be a teacher and to instruct the little lambs as well as the mature sheep (Luke 22:32). Thus both Paul and Peter had stepping-stone experiences. The will needs to be *all for God*, but it has to be *guided with instruction* from above.

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

The previous chapter showed that God judges the new creature, not the old man. God commends the *will* that wants to do right. The *efforts* made by the new mind to control the flesh show the good intentions. We would be discouraged if we judged ourselves according to the *flesh*. "Walk ... after the Spirit [not the flesh]" implies a continual, lifelong struggle. We are judged by the general tenor of our life, not by an individual act.

Comment: The last ten words, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," are spurious according to the *Diaglott* and *Scotfield*.

Reply: That is true, although there is nothing wrong with those words. The emphasis is on those “who walk not after the flesh, but [who walk] after the Spirit” in the sense of a *continual walk* and not just an emotional giving of the heart to the Lord and then forgetting about it. Paul was talking about a life dedicated to God and the recognition that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only means of salvation in this age.

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

Paul’s reasoning in this epistle is didactic, analytical, and mathematical. Here he contrasted the “law of sin and death” and the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”—a law of faith as opposed to a law of works. “The Spirit of *life* in Christ Jesus” made the Jew “free from the law of *sin and death*.” What is the “Spirit of life,” a pithy but very comprehensive term that is pregnant with thought?

The term makes us think of the breath of life. In the past, a particularly odious type of criminality was performed by cruel dictators who were victorious in battle; namely, the survivors of an enemy that was especially hated and despised were manacled to the corpses lying on the battlefield and left there to die. The survivors could not rid themselves of the corpses, which began to putrefy. Not only was there the unbearable odor of death, but the decaying corpses usually caused disease that also killed the survivors.

Alluding to that practice, Paul used military terms here, but we will not delve into them lest we lose the theme of the message. One could not get free from the bondage of the Law except by coming into Christ.

Comment: A footnote in the *Diaglott* reads, “There seems to be here an allusion to [an] ancient custom of certain tyrants, who bound a *dead body* to a *living man*, and obliged him to carry it about, till the contagion from the putrid mass took away his life.—*Clarke*.”

Rom. 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

The Law, which is strong, could not bring life because, all flesh having fallen, no one could perfectly obey it. The flesh of fallen man is weak, and the perfect Law could be obeyed only by a perfect man, namely, Jesus. As quoted earlier, Jesus said, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41).

The expression “God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” would be more easily understood if worded a little differently. In other words, God sent Jesus in the likeness of human nature, which had become sinful through Adam’s disobedience; that is, Jesus was made in the likeness of the race that had sinned. God sent Jesus as a perfect human being—He sent Jesus in the flesh of mankind, which, having become sinful, was under the curse. This important point can be stated several ways.

God sent His own Son “for sin,” that is, for the purpose of dying as a *sin offering*. Jesus came “to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). By perfect obedience to his Father and the Law, Jesus “condemned sin in the flesh.”

Willful sin cannot be gratuitously forgiven, even with life rights. Jesus had to take the place of Adam both in his perfection and under the curse. Both aspects were necessary. Not only did Jesus die on the Cross, but he had a crown of thorns, he was betrayed by a familiar friend, etc.—all as offsets for Adam’s disobedience. By Jesus’ “stripes,” we are healed, but stripes are

not forgiveness (Isa. 53:5). Jesus took the place of the condemned Adam; he died a substitutionary death, taking the place of the sinner.

The statement that Jesus was “wounded for our transgressions” applies primarily to the willful aspect of Adam’s sin (Isa. 53:5). Jesus was the substitute for Adam, and the curse came indirectly on the human race through Adam. Only to Adam was it commanded, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die [dying thou shalt die]” (Gen. 2:16,17). The implication is that the other trees were meant to sustain life indefinitely. Adam was inherently created with the right to live forever predicated upon obedience. Since the remainder of the human race—all of Adam’s posterity—are condemned in him, it was necessary for Jesus to die for Adam in order to fully exonerate mankind.

It is incorrect to think that all willful sin is forgiven through Jesus’ death. Paul told us, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). He also said, “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men[’s sins] they follow after” (1 Tim. 5:24). Willful sin receives stripes, punishment, either in this life or in the next life.

There is another way that Jesus “condemned sin in the flesh.” As God’s dear Son, he came down from heaven and submitted to the ignominious death on the Cross. Had we been able to view the Crucifixion, we would have seen the depravity of mankind being manifested toward this innocent person, thereby condemning the sin in fallen man and revealing his base, bestial character. This exhibition, with all the indignities, insults, spittings, stripes, and mockings, brought out the depravity of man. When an audiovisual lesson of the actual Crucifixion is shown in the future, it will condemn sin in the flesh. We think Paul, with his deep reasoning, had this idea in mind.

God sent His own Son from heaven to this sin-cursed earth to be subjected to the utmost depravity of mankind. In addition, the Scriptures say, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). The Crucifixion shows what sin leads to. Thus, in the final analysis, the permission of evil with the death of God’s Son will be seen as the best way to convey a lesson that will never be forgotten by all future and past sentient creations. The extreme intent of God is shown in that He, as a loving Father, permitted His Son to die such a death. God’s omniscience could see that all kinds of beneficial lessons would be forthcoming through the manifestation of the worthiness of Christ. Therefore, we feel that for the Crucifixion not to be photographed as it really happened would be the utmost tragedy. The event was so important that it will not just be stated coldly in a book as “Jesus tasted death for every man.” Indeed the emotional trauma has its place.

Thus Jesus “condemned sin in the flesh” by proving that a perfect man could keep the Law and hence obtain life. In so doing, he indirectly exposed the sinful condition of man. Not only did Jesus make man aware of sin, but he condemned sin in the flesh of *all* mankind. He revealed that sin had come upon all.

Rom. 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

God judges the converted Christian by his will, intent, and purpose in life rather than by mathematically adding up all the good deeds and the misdeeds on a calculator and taking the sum and dividing it by number of acts to see if the percentage is past 75. How wonderful that God judges the *habit* of thought, the *habit* of purpose, etc., of an individual, for this method enables fallen man to worship and serve God in spirit with the robe of Christ’s righteousness

shielding him from the perfection of God Himself. No man can see God—or communicate with Him in a direct sense—and live without some kind of shield. The high calling is for sonship, and to please God and not receive condemnation, we must walk “after the Spirit.” There is no condemnation if the Spirit of God (the mind of God, the new creature) dwells in us.

Verse 4 is used in *Tabernacle Shadows* in connection with the jewels of the high priest’s breastplate. The Pastor showed that the righteousness of the Law can be fulfilled in us as new creatures, for a new creature can please and serve God based on his *intent* and the *robe of Christ’s righteousness*.

Rom. 8:5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

The world makes a distinction between a vocation and an avocation. Our real vocation, or employment, is for God, whereas our earthly work and salaries are only of a temporal nature to provide things that are decent and honest in the sight of men for ourselves, our spouse, our children, and relatives such as elderly parents. With mankind, the reverse is true. The emphasis, or driving force, is on succeeding in business and getting a name, fame, money, land, and possessions. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are usually interpreted along earthly lines, but the Christian lives on a higher level. “They that are after the Spirit” think in terms of the spirit realm, the things hoped for.

Rom. 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

“To be carnally minded” is to be concerned with the things of the flesh and to follow the old nature. Carnal-mindedness, if pursued and given in to after having once tasted the wonderful things of God, leads to the death of the new creature (Heb. 6:4-6).

“But to be spiritually minded is life and peace [both in the present life and in the next age].” Of course if we are faithful, the *fullness* of life and peace will occur beyond the veil. To win the race and get the crown would bring the utmost joy and peace. However, with prayer and the intent to do God’s will, one can have the peace of conscience and the hope of life even now, in the struggle of the present life. For the consecrated, all things have become new. For example, the Christian can look in a store window and admire temporal things yet have no desire for them.

Comment: Two Scriptures come to mind. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa. 26:3). “The peace of God, which passeth all [worldly] understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7).

Being “carnally minded” in the present life leads to extinction. Being “spiritually minded,” if pursued, secures *real* life and the peace of salvation. As Paul said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7,8).

In chapter 7, Paul showed that the only way a Jew could be legally free from the Law was to become dead through the body of Christ. Nevertheless, the Law lived on, and the Law Covenant is still in effect on the unconverted Jew today. The Jew became dead to the Law through the body of Christ, but he was then married to the living Savior. Thus, for a Jew to be loosed from the Law, he had to become identified with Jesus, dying with him (becoming dead in him) in baptism and being raised and married to the living, resurrected Christ.

Rom. 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of

God, neither indeed can be.

Paul continued to speak to those who had entered the school of Christ. There were both dangers and rewards for them in the present life—and a judgment yet future. Paul was using several chapters to lead up to a crucial moment.

If we walk according to the deeds of the flesh and follow the old nature, that path will lead to sin. To be carnally minded is not necessarily to be sinfully minded at first, but no matter how good our motives may be, if we walk according to the deeds of our flesh, we will end up in that condition. There are good things in life that are not sinful in themselves, but if we follow the old nature and listen to the old mind, the ultimate result will be death.

Rom. 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Rom. 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his [he is not a disciple of Christ].” It is important to study the life of Christ—what he did, what he said, what he taught—and the life of his apostles and the Old Testament. The will of God for us is our sanctification predicated upon the food and instruction in righteousness that comes from His Word (1 Thess. 4:3).

Comment: Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

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

Comment: The *Diaglott* has, “And if Christ be in you, the body indeed is dead as to sin; but the Spirit is life as to righteousness.”

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

Our mortal bodies are quickened by God’s Holy Spirit, which dwells in us. If anything goes wrong between begettal and quickening, the fetus dies—and so does the new creature. Quickening is the assurance that we have been accepted, that there is life, and that we will be of the Bride *if we continue faithful*. However, to not be quickened and feel this assurance does not mean we have not been recognized or begotten of the Holy Spirit. Begettal is a simple stage.

Q: What is the difference between begettal of the Holy Spirit and quickening of the new creature?

A: Quickening is a manifestation that the fetus is not dead. When a person gives his heart to the Lord, the experience is new, but after a while, he realizes that a radical change has taken place in his life. Then the desire, the interest, and the enthusiasm to do God’s will is awakened in him, resulting in more energy. Quickening is evidence within us that we are pleasing God. As the Apostle John said, “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye all know it” (1 John 2:20 corrected translation).

In the beginning, we are sick with sin and our own nothingness. We see things negatively, and we want to approach God. When the way is presented to us, we accept it, but that is only the start of consecration. The new life grows and matures. However, the quickening stage has to

be reached in order for consecration to be meaningful, even for a place in the Great Company. Only then can there be a viable life. Without quickening, there is complacency and the feeling that one is in need of nothing. The person feels good and perhaps knows that hellfire does not exist. He may attend church once a week and feels he is trying to please God, but consecration is more than that. One has to make some progress. If we achieve the progress that we are capable of *to the utmost*, we will be of the Little Flock, but we must progress to even get life. Thus quickening is energy that is expressed in various ways, thus manifesting an interest in and an enthusiasm and desire for pleasing God—for example, visiting the sick, witnessing with tracts, and providing the home for meetings. The Christian's faith is justified as a *living faith* by works. In other words, in quickening, works evidence that there is a *living faith*.

Comment: Being aware of this distinction helps to refute those who say, "His consecration was not accepted because there is no evidence of Spirit begetting." Such statements are dangerous because life can exist—it just has not reached the quickening stage yet. We should encourage someone to go on, not to draw back from the consecration vow.

Reply: Another way to consider this subject is to make the distinction between self-denial and cross bearing. Denial occurs first. We deny self and become beheaded for Christ. Cross bearing occurs subsequently when we become active in some way in the truth and/or suffer for it.

Rom. 8:12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

The old mind is very clever. For instance, it may reason, "A healthy body is a healthy mind." Then the individual spends an inordinate amount of time doing physical exercise. Paul reasoned, "Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). Paul did not say that bodily exercise has no profit but that it profits *little*. Hence we should not deceive ourselves into thinking that a healthy body is a healthy spiritual mind, and then get lost in the field of diet or exercise. Both have their place, but neither should sidetrack the Christian.

The point is that the mind can play tricks in our reasoning, and we are not to be debtors to the flesh, "to live after the flesh." However, Paul did not say, "Pay *no attention* to the flesh," for we have to use common sense. For example, to habitually do work for the Lord into the wee hours of the morning day after day leads to a foggy mind and can even adversely affect the nervous system. Thus there are two extremes: (1) not doing anything for the Lord or (2) being abnormally absorbed. The Christian life is a marathon race that requires a life of being faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). We have to use some degree of reason in order to pace ourselves.

Q: Is the implication that we are debtors to God?

A: Yes. If we were debtors to the flesh, then, *at best*, we would dedicate our lives to social programs, and we would be high-minded about our works. The flesh would fight in the army, for example, but we do not have such obligations to country. Our obligation is to *trust and obey God*. The whole New Testament is a detailed description of what God expects of the Christian.

Rom. 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" is another way of stating what was said in verse 6: "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Now Paul added, "But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." To "mortify the deeds of the body" is to crucify the old man. People come to Christ under various circumstances. Some consecrate because they were born into a truth environment,

experiencing a gradual absorption almost from birth. Others consecrate later in life in a sudden and even dramatic or very emotional way. On almost the spur of the moment, they become thoroughly convicted of what a wretched sinner they are. Individuals in that circumstance make a sincere, honest confession, but they find that habits ingrained in them have to be mortified. They have to give up things that are unbecoming to a Christian. For instance, we cannot imagine Jesus with a cigarette. Also, it is unbecoming for a woman to wear heavy lipstick. As we get older and become more familiar with God's Word, we find additional things that we did not recognize previously. We then acknowledge that we could stand improvement in those areas as well. The Holy Spirit leads us to mortify the deeds of the body.

The abnormal application of verse 13 is when people think, for example, that if they sleep on a board or go out in the desert and become a hermit, depriving themselves of all the niceties of life, and scourge themselves, they will be pleasing to God. They believe that cuts, scars, and bruises inflicted on the body constitute mortifying the flesh. They do not realize that to mortify the deeds of the flesh means to curb the desires of the body and keep them within the confines of the advice of Scripture.

We are to walk as children of the day, as children of the resurrection, *now in the present life* (Luke 20:36; 1 Thess. 5:5). God does not judge us according to the deeds of the flesh, but He does judge us according to a *living, active faith*, a faith that is evidenced by deeds. He judges the new creature's will and desire.

Rom. 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Verse 14 is self-explanatory.

Rom. 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

"Abba" is an Aramaic expression meaning "Father." When we consecrated, we "received the Spirit of adoption." God begets us through Jesus. Prior to consecration, we were of Adam, but now we are adopted by God.

Comment: In Gethsemane, Jesus addressed his Father as "Abba": "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark 14:36).

Reply: "Abba" is a term of endearment, recognition, and closeness. From the Father's standpoint, the closeness was with His Son, and from the Son's standpoint, it was his realization of the closeness of the Father. "Abba" is a baby term like "Da-da," one of the first things a child says. It is indicative of private worship, where one enters his "closet" (Matt. 6:6). In public worship, the general instruction is, "Let thy words be few" (Eccl. 5:2). Of course exceptions do occur, such as the dedication of the Temple, when a long prayer was appropriate. An instance when we might use "Abba" is to express heartfelt gratitude for being translated out of darkness into the Father's marvelous light.

Paul could have said simply, "Whereby [now] we cry, Father," but he added "Abba" for a very good reason. He wanted to make sure that *both* Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome realized they had been *adopted* into Christ as *sons*. The Jewish element used the term "Abba," and the Greeks used "Father." Paul was trying to knit the class together by showing that Jews and Gentiles were *one* in Christ. The *same* God was over *both* elements, and *both* regarded Him as "Father." The Gentiles had been without God, but they were brought into a *new* family. The Jews had been under the Law, but they were brought out of that Law into a *new* condition.

Both had been *adopted*; they were taken out of different backgrounds into *one new common relationship*. To be adopted into this *new* relationship and family, they had left the home of their previous father, the devil, and gone into the home of God (John 8:44).

The thought of adoption was encouraging, comforting, and satisfying to both Jewish and Gentile Christians, for it indicated that after going to the effort to adopt them, God would *continue* to shower care on them. Christ had died for them, paying a great price to make this adoption possible. Therefore, they should want to live *in harmony* and serve God as *one* in Christ. Their former backgrounds should be forgotten, for they were now in a new home with a new Father.

Comment: In Galatians 4:6, Paul said, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

Before we were adopted by the Father as sons, we were condemned as children of wrath, disobedience, and the devil (Eph. 2:2,3). When we were adopted, we were transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, of which God Himself is the Head (1 Pet. 2:9).

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

In what way does the Holy Spirit bear witness with our spirit “that we are the children [sons] of God”? We know what is right and good, we honor the Father, we admit the goodness of His standard, and we are pleased with His virtues. Moreover, we recognize that a fight, a struggle, is going on within us between the flesh and the new mind. The tendency of the flesh is to go downward, and the new mind aspires upward. Our *continual* desire to please God is a testimony of the new mind and of the existence of the new creature.

The heart is deceitfully and desperately wicked, but the new mind is pure (Jer. 17:9). The two are constantly at enmity with each other. The fact that we want to be on the side of right, the side that pleases God, is a testimony of our desire, intent, and will.

Rom. 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Paul continued to pursue the theme of children and adoption—“And if children, then ... heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Not only has God adopted us into a new family, but if we continue to try to serve and please Him, we will become *actual* sons and joint-heirs with Christ. In other words, *if we are faithful*, the *reckoned* relationship will become *very real*. That is why Paul said, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk ... after the Spirit,” that is, whose efforts are to please God and recognize His arrangements and provisions while mortifying the deeds of the flesh (verse 1).

Stated succinctly, “no cross, no crown.” Suffering with Christ is cross bearing, and cross bearing can be defined as suffering for the truth in one form or another. There are other kinds of sufferings as well, for example, illness. Or sufferings might come because we were at fault for doing something, and we get the consequences. Thus there are two kinds of sufferings, and both are educational—sufferings *for* Christ and sufferings *with* Christ.

Comment: This chapter contains a lot of “if” clauses, showing the circumstance is conditional.

Reply: Yes, the modifying clause here is “if ... we suffer with him [Christ].” *If* we mortify the deeds of the flesh, *if* we continually show the sincerity of our intentions through our actions, service, sufferings, etc., we will continue to be reckoned as sons and eventually be glorified.

“If so be that we suffer with him [Christ], that we may be also glorified together.” The words “glorified together” can mean being glorified where Christ is, but another interpretation can also be given. Since Jesus has already been glorified, the clause can mean that the presentation of the Church to the Father will be as a company, and Jesus will do the introduction. In other words, there are different stages. If we are faithful in the present life, we will be accepted of Jesus when we die and hear him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21). Ever since 1878, anyone who dies faithfully is caught up in the air in earth’s atmosphere, where Jesus is present with the risen saints, but when the body is wholly collected, the complete Church will be presented to the Father. Of course we do not know all the details, but each saint will first meet Jesus, who will greet him with the assurance “You are now of my body class.” Our understanding is that glorification is the presentation to the Father and to the holy angels, which is yet future and will occur just before the marriage of the Lamb.

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

How many of us can make this statement, especially when going through a severe trial? Paul had the proper perspective. He certainly experienced meaningful “sufferings of this present time” and wanted to impart his confidence to the Christians at Rome. Not only are the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in the Little Flock, but restitution for the whole world is waiting until this class is developed in the Gospel Age. Then will come the promised Kingdom blessings.

Rom. 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

The earnest expectation of the human race unknowingly awaits the completion of the Church, the “manifestation of the sons of God.” The *collective* sons of God will be manifested at the introduction of the Kingdom Age.

Q: Is the “manifestation of the sons of God” the *epiphania* or the *apokalupsis*?

A: It is both, for both terms refer to the revealment to the world that the Kingdom Age has started. “Saviours [plural] shall come up on mount Zion” to deliver Jacob (Obadiah 21). One of the first acts of the glorified Christ will be the deliverance of the Holy Remnant. In that day, God will manifest that a new power has taken over.

Rom. 8:20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope,

The human race “was made subject to vanity [frailty].” All of Adam’s posterity have inherited the death penalty because of his disobedience and thus are born in sin and “shapen in iniquity” (Psa. 51:5).

“By reason of him who hath subjected the same [the human race] in hope.” The human race is condemned, but there is hope for retrieval. The pronoun “him” refers to God, but there is another lesson too. Satan has taken advantage of the frailty of man. God could have stopped the fall right away and started over with a new human pair, but He permitted evil for man’s experience. The “hope” is for deliverance. Although the world is unaware at the present time, God has given reason for hope, especially from the standpoint of the two salvations.

Q: Does that “hope” go back to Genesis 3:15, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”?

A: Yes. At the end of the Kingdom Age, the seed of woman will bruise the serpent’s head. Satan will be destroyed, just as Pharaoh was destroyed in the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus.

God subjected the human family to frailty through the disobedience of Adam, knowing in advance that Adam would sin and evil would be permitted. However, before Adam sinned, God made provision, through His plan, to ultimately rescue the human race. All are condemned in Adam and die because he willfully ate the forbidden “sour grape”—this is *the* sin that has come upon the human race.

Rom. 8:21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

The contrast of “bondage” and “liberty” had a particular application to the feelings of the Jewish and Gentile Christians to whom this letter was addressed. Those who wanted to serve God would be engaged in a struggle, a losing and hopeless battle—a slavery or bondage to sin, corruption, and death—except for their new relationship in Christ. They thought of this liberty as being within themselves—freedom and joy, a new lease on life with the hope of salvation through God’s beneficence and grace in the new arrangement in Christ.

In addition, from the standpoint of their civil and political life, the Jews were under the onerous yoke of Roman bondage and servitude. Hence verse 21 also referred to freedom from death, corruption, and servitude at the hands of the Romans—something the Jews especially appreciated. For example, the Romans could compel a Jew to walk a mile with them to bear a burden (Matt. 5:41). Just as Rome was ruling the world at that time, so if those who were called proved faithful, they would be the rulers of the world in God’s Kingdom in the next age. What an inspiring hope for the Christian!

The full feeling of the “glorious liberty of the children of God” will occur after the Little Season (Rev. 20:3,7-9). Anyone who escapes the last deception at the end of the Kingdom Age and enters the age beyond the Millennium will have an experience like that of the overcoming Christian at the end of the Gospel Age, who will receive his change and realize he has been faithful in getting life in either the Little Flock or the Great Company. The different levels of sons will all experience the wonderful emancipation of knowing they have no more fear or danger of death. Of course the Little Flock will have this experience in the supreme sense. However, the saved world of mankind will also have “glorious liberty.”

The term “children of God” is a synonym for “sons of God.” The Little Flock will be THE SONS OF GOD, but the Great Company and the world of mankind will also be sons. When the children of Israel escaped from Egyptian bondage and crossed the Red Sea, Moses and Miriam and the nation joined in a song of exultation. From the more comprehensive standpoint, the antitype for the world will occur at the end of the Kingdom Age, after the Little Season. From another perspective, the release of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage pertains to the experience of the Christian Church, who will feel salvation in the full sense beyond the veil.

Comment: Sonship for the saved of the human race at the end of the Kingdom Age will be full restoration to what Adam had before he sinned.

Rom. 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

The human creation groans and travails in pain together during the permission of evil. The earth has also been cursed, and the animals suffer.

Rom. 8:23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Not only does the world groan but also the consecrated, who have the “firstfruits of the Spirit.” The whole house of the firstborn—the Little Flock and the Great Company—have the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the firstfruits, as pictured by the sheaf offering on the 16th of Nisan. Then come the Little Flock and the Great Company, as represented in the offering of two loaves of leavened bread, or cakes, at Pentecost. Finally, the Feast of Tabernacles shows the world’s experience of redemption. Stated succinctly, the Passover pertains to Jesus, the Pentecost offering pictures the Church, and the Feast of Tabernacles (following the Day of Atonement) applies to the world. The word “firstfruits” implies a *later* outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Kingdom for the people (Joel 2:28).

We wait “for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” We are reckoned sons of God now, but we await the *actual deliverance* of the *whole* body to the divine nature. The world unknowingly waits for the manifestation of the sons of God, the Church (verse 19). The world is ignorant of the reason for the permission of evil. In the type, the high priest came out in garments of glory and beauty to bless the people after the blood of the Lord’s goat had been sprinkled on the Mercy Seat and after the Day of Atonement, which is the world’s awakening, or recognition, that atonement has been made.

Rom. 8:24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

“For we [the church of the firstborn] are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope.” When one receives that for which he had hoped, he no longer hopes for it.

Because of Jesus’ death and *resurrection*, we have a *real hope* of a resurrection. Faith and hope will cease, or perish, but love will remain in the glorified state, when the deliverance of the body of Christ has taken place. The order of our love should be God, the Word, Jesus, the brethren, and mankind.

Rom. 8:25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

With patience, we wait for the fulfillment of our hope. Jesus said, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). Not only do we wait for the finishing of our own course, but we see God’s long patience as a “husbandman [who] waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth ... until he receive the early and latter rain” (James 5:7). We are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body [the whole Church]” (verse 23).

Rom. 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Comment: Especially in a severe trial, when our thinking is confused and we do not know which way to turn, the Holy Spirit “maketh intercession for us” in prayer.

Verse 26 can be viewed from the following perspectives:

1. During times when we do not know how to express in words what we want to pray for, the Holy Spirit interprets for us. Sometimes that type of prayer—a groaning prayer—is more acceptable and meaningful than an intelligent prayer. What a wonderful provision!

2. When we become aware of secret sins and take the proper steps of repentance, the Holy Spirit assists with our groaning spirit, our attitude of contrition. David prayed, “Cleanse thou me from secret faults” (Psa. 19:12). Those faults may be unknown by others but known to self, or vice versa. Our secret faults can be viewed from the perspective of God, of those who know us, or from our own personal experience. Our Heavenly Father looks for our proper intent, or will, which is pictured by the kidneys, the reins of the heart. Just as a horse is guided by two reins, so there is a subtle relationship between the kidneys and the heart. When animals were offered in sacrifice in Old Testament times, the kidneys were presented but not the heart. The reins represent the groanings, the intent, the real desire, and the intensity of that desire is very meaningful. Our conscience, emotions, and thinking all have to be instructed, but hypocrisy has to be eradicated. Hypocrisy may be in the mind or in the heart, but it cannot be in the kidneys. God, who examines the heart, has such powerful X-ray eyes that He can separate even the marrow of our bones, as it were. We try to be aware of that fact, and thus Paul said, “Let a man examine himself” (1 Cor. 11:28). Sometimes we overstate our professions, even in regard to faith, so Paul also said, “Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God” (Rom. 14:22).

The Holy Spirit has many operations, one of which is to help our infirmities. Another helpful operation is the Spirit of remembrance—not only remembrance of Scripture but remembrance in the harder sense of judging ourselves (John 14:26). Hopefully, we are making progress.

Rom. 8:27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

God, who searches the heart, knows “what is the mind of the Spirit” because the Holy Spirit “maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

Comment: In verse 26, in the statement “the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered,” the translators properly used the neuter “itself.” Here in verse 27, they reverted back to the pronoun “he.”

Reply: A stethoscope, which a doctor uses to listen to the heart and gastric functions, is like the searching of God’s power, the Holy Spirit. In ancient Egypt, one Pharaoh pictured God’s Spirit as a line coming down with a hand at the bottom that was around everything, showing that God was in touch, as with a stethoscope. The Holy Spirit is also a helping hand—a hand that helps our infirmities. In fact, God’s Holy Spirit is a channel of intelligence. It is also a channel of power, for it transmits and receives; that is, it is like a sending and receiving device. Certainly we would not want God’s Holy Spirit to be withdrawn, as has happened to many. The hope is that such individuals will return to the Lord and make up for lost ground. Thus the Holy Spirit is very real, and it seems that in all of God’s human and animate creatures, even the genes of the body have intelligence, for they know when an enemy comes into the body. God’s Holy Spirit is very, very penetrating. As the Creator and the Upholder of the universe, God controls everything and is aware of all that happens.

As an illustration along another line, if we are discussing a technical subject, we want to know if the listener is on the same wavelength. We wonder if he gets the gist of what we are trying to say. Of course God knows us *thoroughly*—He knows us inside and out, our “downsitting” and our “uprising” (Psa. 139:2). From our perspective, we try to understand His plan, purposes, and thinking. We certainly realize our imperfections in knowing them, but the Holy Spirit helps

us. To receive information from God in this sin-sick and blind world is truly a miracle.

Verses 26 and 27 can also be explained from the following perspective. Our new mind makes up for our bodily infirmities. From this standpoint, “the Spirit” refers to our new-creature mind, which, in contending with the flesh, has to intercede for us, and God recognizes our fight against the old man. From this perspective, the term “the Spirit” is not a reference to God’s Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit does not groan unintelligibly. Our holy mind, the intent of the new creature, wants to know and do the will of God. Thus the new creature groans, for it is in a weak body. Since God can read the desires of our heart, an audible prayer is not necessary in some instances.

Incidentally, the words “for us” in verse 26 are spurious. Without that phrase, we can see more clearly that “the Spirit,” which makes intercession, is the new mind. Verse 27 reads, “Because he [that is, the new mind] maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” In Greek, the pronoun is only male or female, even though the proper thought is neuter. Hence we have the liberty to change “he” to “it.”

The following quote on Romans 8:26,27 from the *Fifth Volume*, pages 287-291, is good. It appears under the subhead “Groanings Which Cannot Be Uttered.”

“[Romans 8:26,27, which is] ... intended to convey to God’s people an understanding of the heavenly Father’s love and care toward them, has been sadly misunderstood by many. They tell us that the holy Spirit groans for them to the Father; and some attempt to give audible utterance to the groans themselves; and by some it is supposed that the amount of groaning which they do, somehow helps the holy Spirit in the matter, compensating for the groanings which it cannot utter—though they cannot see just how. It would indeed be strange, if the holy Spirit were a person, and, as the catechisms assert, ‘equal in power’ with the Father and the Son, that he should find it necessary to address the Father and the Son on behalf of the Lord’s people, with unutterable groans. Our Lord Jesus said that we might come direct to him and that we might come direct to the Father, assuring us, ‘The Father himself loveth you.’ Yet from this scripture under consideration some have gotten the idea that we must needs go to the Father and to the Son through the holy Spirit as a mediator, who would groan for us, and intercede for us, that we might be accepted of the Father and of the Son. This is in harmony with the prevailing confusion of thought respecting the holy Spirit and its office.

“The error of this interpretation is further noticeable when we consider that if the groans could not be uttered they would not be groans at all; for what is not uttered is not a groan. But this passage would appear equally strange and inconsistent, if we were to interpret it to mean that the holy Spirit, the influence or power of Almighty Jehovah, is unable to express itself intelligently. We know that in past ages God’s mind, will, Spirit, found abundant expression through the words and deeds of the prophets, and we cannot suppose that he has any less power or ability today. What, then, can this scripture signify—‘The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered’?

“The mistake is in supposing that it is God’s Spirit which supplicates. On the contrary, the Spirit which maketh intercession for us is *our own spirit*, the spirit of the saint, which supplicates God, and often fails to express itself properly. A glance at the text, with its connections, will make manifest the propriety of this interpretation. The Apostle had just been writing of the sin-burdened humanity groaning in its fetters. He assures us that it shall be granted liberty from the bondage, when the Church, the ‘sons of God,’ under the Captain of their Salvation, shall have been glorified. (Verses 19-21) He then passes from the *groanings* of the world to the present condition of the Church, in which *we groan*: ‘Ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the deliverance

of our body.’ Verse 23.

“The renewed or transformed mind or spirit in the Church once worldly, is now holy and spiritual: but our bodies are still human, and have the Adamic imperfections. Hence we, as new creatures, are burdened by the flesh, and *groan* for the promised deliverance into Christ’s likeness in the first resurrection. The Apostle explains that we may by faith, reckon the earthly body dead, and think of ourselves as new creatures perfected, and thus realize ourselves *saved now*—‘*saved by hope.*’ (Verse 24) Then, having shown how we may reckon ourselves, he explains to us that from the divine standpoint we are reckoned as ‘new’ and ‘holy’ and ‘spiritual’ beings: he shows that God, viewing us from this standpoint, recognizes not the flesh and its weaknesses and imperfections—but the spirit, the mind, the intentions, the will, the ‘new creature,’ devoted to his service. God knows when our holy spirit (new mind) is willing and the flesh weak, and he judges us not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

“It was our begetting of the Spirit, our adoption of a new will, fully consecrated to the Lord, that brought us into a new relationship to God, and into these new hopes wherein we rejoice: and so ‘likewise the spirit [our new, holy mind] also helpeth [maketh up for] our [bodily] infirmities. For we know not [even] what we should pray for as we ought [much less are we always able to do as we would like]; but the spirit itself [our holy mind] maketh intercession [for us—omitted by oldest MSS] with groanings which cannot be uttered [in words]. And he that searcheth the hearts [God] knoweth what is the mind [Greek *phronema*—inclination] of [our] spirit, because he [or it—our spirit] maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.’

“In other words, God is pleased to accept the heart desires of his people, both in prayer and in service, notwithstanding the imperfection of their flesh—their earthen vessels. And he does accept these heart desires.

“How fortunate for us, in our ignorance and weakness, that our heavenly Father accepts the intentions of our hearts instead of our words; for frequently his people have seriously asked amiss! We think of this whenever we hear God’s people pray that God would baptize them with the holy Spirit and with fire. The prayer is offered in a good conscience, and with a desire for a blessing only; but not understanding the passage of scripture which he quotes, the petitioner really asks for a blessing to be followed by a curse. The prediction that Christ would baptize with the holy Spirit and with fire was made by John the baptizer. The blessing portion of this came upon the waiting Church, at Pentecost, and subsequently upon all the faithful ‘remnant’ of Israel, but its latter feature was fulfilled upon the rejected Jewish nation—in the baptism of fire, destruction, trouble, which wholly destroyed their polity in the year A.D. 70. But very graciously God does not answer his people’s prayers according to their asking, but according to the intentions of the petitioner—he granting them blessing only.

“Some have had the experience of being overtaken in a fault, and trapped by the Adversary through some weakness of the fallen human nature: they felt almost disheartened as they approached the throne of the heavenly grace in prayer. They had no words for utterance, but merely groaned in spirit to God, ‘*being burdened.*’ But the heavenly Father did not insist that they must formulate the petition in exactly proper language before he would hear them: instead he graciously answered their heart’s desires, the unexpressed groans of their heart, which sought his forgiveness, his blessing and comfort. He answered the unuttered prayers, granted strength and blessing, with a blessed realization of forgiveness.

“This is the Apostle’s argument in this whole connection, and it will be observed that he sums up the argument by saying, ‘What shall we say then? [In view of the fact that God has made every arrangement on our behalf, ignoring our weaknesses and imperfections, which are

contrary to our wills, and not reckoning them as our deeds—and ignoring the lameness of our petitions, and our inability to express our desires, and on the contrary, making arrangements to bless us according to the spirit of our minds, as we are unable even to give utterance to our groans in our imperfect prayers, we will conclude—] If God be [thus] for us, who can be against us?’ Verse 31.”

Rom. 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Notice that verse 28 does not say that “all things work together *for the best* to them that love God.” Rather, “all things work together *for good*.” The word “good” is significant, lest we think we can be careless and make mistakes with the attitude “God will forgive us.” As long as a person is in a penitent mood and is striving to do God’s will, we know that all things work together for his *good*, but not necessarily for his *best* interest, for not all will make the Little Flock. Since verse 28 is meant for *both* the Little Flock (the best class) and the Great Company (the good class), the word “good” is appropriate for all.

It is true that even if one blunders, a trial will work out for the best *under that circumstance*. However, that very failure may bar one from making the Little Flock. Since the individual may still get life in the Great Company, all things will work together for *good* for him in the final analysis. Therefore, “good” can apply to both classes, for both classes love God, are virgins, and get life.

Who are the ones “called according to his [God’s] purpose”? All of the consecrated have been called. When Jesus asked, “Whom do you say that I am?” Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus responded, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood have not revealed this truth unto you, but my Father in heaven” (Matt. 16:15-17 paraphrase). Sometimes the call refers to our progress and experience *before* consecration, and sometimes it refers to our progress and experience *after* consecration. Here in verse 28, the reference is to the latter—to those who responded when God issued the call. By heeding the call, they are now “the called according to his purpose.” Similarly, Paul said, “Ye see your calling, brethren” (1 Cor. 1:26), and “Ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4).

Comment: We are called to be of the Little Flock, not the Great Company.

Reply: We are called to do God’s will, and ostensibly to be of the Little Flock, which is the hope of this age. However, those who respond to the call have to do things in a decent and orderly fashion. Sinners are first called to *repentance*, which requires contrition. When made aware of their undone condition, they must humble themselves and listen to Jesus. Recognizing that they have nothing of their own that is worthwhile, they hear Jesus say through the Word, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). There is a progression during which individuals are in the way of consecration and are approaching justification, but not until they actually take the step of consecration do they become justified by God with the merit of Christ’s righteousness. At the point when God accepts their consecration, they become sons, even if a little baby. Thus here in Romans, those who are “the called” according to God’s purpose have accepted the gospel and entered the family. If we look up all Scriptures pertaining to the call, we will see that some refer to being on the outside coming in and that others refer to being on the inside, being of the called class who have humbled themselves and given their heart and will to God or Jesus depending on the level of understanding at the time.

Comment: The Greek word *agathos*, which is translated “good,” has that rendering 63 times and is never rendered “best,” so it does seem that the Holy Spirit intentionally chose that word.

Q: Is the theme of verse 28 that no matter what persecutions or trials happen, they will all work out for our good ultimately?

A: Yes, that is what we are saying—for our good but not necessarily for our best, since our *best* interest is being of the Little Flock. Some *walk with* Jesus, and others *follow* him. Those who are more-than-overcomers walk with him as his companions; the others are bridesmaids, not the Bride. We emphasize this distinction because our old creature looks for excuses in its behavior, thinking that if a mistake is made, the Lord will overlook it for our best interest. Rather, if we make a mistake and are repentant, God will overrule it for our good. (Of course for some, a mistake will be overruled for the individual's best interest, but this verse is generalizing.)

It is one thing for an individual who is part of the Great Company to see God, and it is another thing to actually be in the divine family, that is, to be in the inner-circle family of God. There is a big gulf between the two distinctions.

Comment: Verse 28 is used to encourage brethren who are going through a difficult trial—the loss of a child or a severe car accident, for example. It does not distinguish between the Little Flock and the Great Company.

Reply: Even the reason for a trial is not always in the best interest of an individual. The purpose of a trial may simply be for development—to discipline the Christian to trust God, come what may. Or a trial may be permitted because of something that was done improperly. Then the person suffers the natural effects of disobedience, and the purpose is to teach him a lesson. Sometimes lessons are learned the hard way through discipline for carelessness in Christian behavior. There are different types of carelessness and negligence, and the Christian has to be vigilant. Verse 28 is referring to one's whole or overall experience, whatever it is. As Old Testament examples, Joseph's experience worked out for his best interest, and the experiences of his brethren worked out for their good. At the time the brothers sold Joseph to the Midianites to be taken to Egypt, they seemed to be getting the upper hand, but when the famine came, which was predetermined by God, Joseph saved the children of Jacob.

Comment: To keep things in perspective, we should view trials from the standpoint of our eternal good, wherever we end up.

Reply: Yes, and there are different degrees of loving God and Jesus. The foolish virgins love Christ but not to the degree that the wise virgins love him. We should guard against self-deception, which can easily happen.

We have certain experiences that do not help us at the moment, for we may react the wrong way, but if we are faithful and submissive, all things will work for good in the final analysis. If we fail in an experience but learn a lesson, that experience is for our *good*. And the *sum total* of life's experiences will work for good if we are obedient. Verse 28 does not say all things will work together for the best because some overcomers will be Little Flock and some will be Great Company. For the Little Flock, all things will work out for the *best*.

Rom. 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

“For whom he [God] did foreknow [as a class], he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” The thought is not that God used His powers to know and tabulate all of the yet uncalled individuals by name. However, a select few—very few—were called when they were in the womb; that is, God knew through His omniscience how they would ultimately

respond. The Apostle Paul and Timothy were probably such individuals.

God foreknew *the class*, and those whom He foreknew, He predestinated to be conformed to the image of His dear Son. What was predestinated was a *Christ class* of 144,000 individuals who would become disciples of Jesus and graduate summa cum laude, with highest praise. With very few exceptions, God did not name the individuals in advance. What constitutes predestination, then, is that God wanted a class to be like Jesus so that His Son would be “the firstborn among many brethren.” However, this statement does not mean God cannot foreknow who will be faithful unto death.

The call is like a magnet that passes over a territory. As the gospel went forth in a westward arc from Judea, the magnetic Holy Spirit power, or suggestion, was looking for the class that would respond. Of course far more than 144,000 respond, but the predestination aspect is that they have to be conformed to the image of Christ in a special sense. There is no emotionalism in God’s calling and selection of the Little Flock. To be of the more-than-overcoming class, one must adhere to His holy standard—period!

Comment: In those rare instances in which God calls someone from the womb, He is looking for a particular type of individual with certain talents who is needed for a specific purpose.

The statement “that he [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brethren” is one proof that he is our elder brother. Jesus was the first to be resurrected, and he is the Head of the Church (Col 1:18).

Rom. 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

A sequence, or progression, is set forth in verse 30: (1) predestinated, (2) called, (3) justified, and (4) glorified. Bro. Russell gave a radically different interpretation of this verse. He said that the order is reversed because the word “glorified” should be “honored,” which can occur on this side of the veil. Notice that the verbs “called,” “justified,” and “glorified” are all in the past tense. We cannot say that all *were glorified*, but we can say that all *were honored* by hearing the words of truth and that all who are faithful *will be glorified together*—future! According to the Pastor, the proper order is honored, justified, and called. He said that the predestinated class are honored by God with the truth about Jesus, next they are justified, and then they are called to the high calling.

However, the order in verse 30 is *correct*, for it sequentially shows our experience. First, we are called; if we respond, we are justified; and being justified, we are honored in the *present* state. All we have to do is to be faithful from then on and not become discouraged by the flesh. As consecrated Christians, we could not have gotten to the present state without God’s favor, and He will continue to help us. Verses 30 and 31 are like a climax in this epistle. Subsequently, Paul went on to other problems.

The consistent use of *past* tense is significant, especially with the expression “them he also honored.” Not only would glorification be future, but using the word “honored” in the *past* tense means this experience must take place in the *present* life. In other words, the substitution of the word “honored” for “glorified” is correct (see Young’s *Analytical Concordance*), but the Pastor was not correct in reversing the order. The order should be as stated in Holy Writ: called, justified, honored. As the foreword to the *Fifth Volume* shows, Bro. Russell clarified his thoughts on justification as time went on. Originally, he thought one was first justified, and then of the justified, some were called to the high calling. However, until one consecrates, he cannot be more than *tentatively* justified. Full or complete justification belongs only to those

who make a full consecration of their all to serve God. The whole object, or point, of tentative justification is that one will go on to consecration and full justification.

In explaining the *reverse* order of verse 30, the Pastor said the following. (1) God honors some with the invitation to the high calling. (2) If they respond, God justifies them. (3) Being justified, these constitute the “called,” that is, the consecrated in the sense used here. Instead verse 30 can be explained as follows. All of the consecrated have been honored or favored by God by the condition they are now in. In order to come to this honored state, God previously justified them. And before being justified, they were called, given an invitation to which they responded by consecrating. Hence the order is (1) God called us, (2) we consecrated, (3) God justified us, and (4) we are now in the present honored state. In the Tabernacle illustration, the Christian progresses from the gate, to the Brazen Altar, to the Laver, to the door (or First Veil), and then enters the Holy. If faithful unto death, he will attain the Most Holy beyond the Second Veil.

In referring to the Little Flock, Revelation 17:14 uses the expression “called, and chosen, and faithful.” (1) The “called” receive the invitation to the high calling. (2) The “chosen” are those of the called who accept the invitation by consecrating. (3) The “faithful” are those of the chosen who are actually faithful unto death and, therefore, comprise the Little Flock.

The progressive steps of the Christian are beautifully illustrated in the Great Pyramid as follows:

1. Our *being called* to the high calling is shown by the Grand Gallery.
2. Our *consecration*, our response to the calling, is pictured by the first bowing down, which takes place upon entering the Ante-chamber.
3. Our *justification* is shown by the second bowing down in the Ante-chamber, which occurs in going under the Granite Leaf. As God accepts our consecration and justifies us, we receive the robe of Christ’s righteousness.
4. Our *being honored* in the school of Christ takes place in the Ante-chamber.

Rom. 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Verse 31 applies to the whole church of the firstborn. All of the called are in a circle as a group. If God is for them and they stay in that circle and do not give up their consecration and go back into the world, who can be against them? The Christian is to be faithful to his vows unto death and not sell the truth and depart back into the world. Leviticus 8:33, pertaining to the consecration of the priesthood, emphatically pictures this principle. Moses (representing God) said to Aaron and his sons, “And ye shall not go out of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation in seven days [the Gospel Age in antitype], until the days of your consecration be at an end: for seven days shall he consecrate you.” Any of the priests who left the Court during the seven days of the consecration of the priesthood were extinguished (Lev. 8:35).

Paul had been leading up to this reasoning. “Since God has been *for us* up to our present state, who can be against us from here on?” In other words, can anything be against us? No! Therefore, when verses 30 and 31 are considered together, Paul was saying, “Since God previously called us, justified us, and is currently honoring us, let us be faithful and go onward to victory, allowing *nothing* to come between us and our goal.” How encouraging to have a *full assurance of faith!* After the powerful reasoning Paul had already laid down, he now added, “If [since] God be [is] for us, who can be against us?”

Comment: Psalm 118:6 reads, “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?”

Comment: Proverbs 23:23 admonishes, “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.”

Comment: Psalm 34:15,17-19 states, “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.... The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.”

Reply: Yes, that text applies in principle, for it is speaking of those who have already given their heart to the Lord. Certainly Christians have failings, but if they are sorry in the proper and true sense in their desire to make their calling and election sure, God knows the condition of their heart and their attitude. Not only is He merciful, but Christians have a High Priest who is compassionate because of his previous experiences down here (Heb. 2:17; 4:15).

Rom. 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Verse 32 shows that of those who are called in this age, God does not want any to perish unless they, of their own choosing, depart out of the way, spiritually speaking. “How shall he [God] not with him [Jesus] also freely give us all things?” If God so loved the *world* that He gave His dear Son, then certainly He has more concern for those who are not in the world but who have *already accepted* the gospel of His Son. God “freely gives us all things”—ways of escape and ways of opportunity as He sees best.

Rom. 8:33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.

Why did Paul interject this question here? He was leading up to the statement “It is God that justifieth.” As has been said, there was a problem in Rome between Jewish and Gentile Christians. The Gentile Christians felt that the Jews were condemned and had been cast off as a nation—even though AD 69 had not yet come. Early Christians had Matthew’s Gospel, in which Jesus had said, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:38). Also, John the Baptist had said of those who came to be baptized of him, “Jesus will baptize you with fire [in the holocaust of AD 70-73]” (Matt. 3:11,12 paraphrase). Thus the Gentiles felt that they had God’s favor and that the Jews had lost favor. Meanwhile, the Jewish Christians looked on the Gentiles with a superior attitude: “Who are you? For thousands of years, we have been under the tutelage and training of God, whereas you are newcomers.” However, Paul was saying, “No matter what your differences are in the class, the fact that God has called all of you, Jew and Gentile, should still your mouths in regard to individual condemnation. He has been dealing with you and educating you. Neither Jews nor Gentiles can stand in their own righteousness, which is as filthy rags. Only by His mercy is God dealing with any of you.”

To the Jewish Christians, Paul was saying, “Do not feel rejected as *individual* Christians. The *nation* of Israel was rejected, but not you. *God* justifies, so you are not to condemn one another.” Paul urged them to serve God *by faith*, not by works. If God is using a different method in the Gospel Age, who can criticize it? *No one, for God is righteous—He justifies!* From the standpoint that faith has *always* been important, this change in method was really no different. As a prime example, Abraham was justified by faith.

For eight chapters, Paul had been building this case. His purpose and theme were to lead up to

this type of self-examination by both classes. Jewish and Gentile Christians were to show mercy and consideration for each other.

Rom. 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Rom. 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again [he is a *risen* Lord], who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit make intercession for us (Rom. 8:26,27). A wrong slant can be put on verses 34 and 35. Those who believe that all one has to do to be saved is to accept the Lord Jesus Christ would feel these Scriptures confirm the thinking “once saved, always saved,” but Paul was not saying that. He was asking, “Who can take us out of this situation?” The answer is so obvious that he let us make that judgment. *We* can take *ourselves* out of the arrangement. Nothing else can “separate us from the love of Christ”—not tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, only *self*. God is for us and means business, but if we become derelict and stray, we can merit condemnation. Especially in the Greek, Paul reasoned so well that the Roman brethren knew the answer. The obvious answer was “self.”

Combining the thoughts in verses 33 and 34 shows that *both* God and Christ are for the Christian—whether Jew or Gentile. The God of the Law dispensation is the *same* God of the new dispensation of grace.

The thought is not that none who advocate “once saved, always saved” will get life, but that such a climate is very dangerous for the Christian. Hence an evil slant can be put on these verses to say that because God is so loving, *nothing* can separate the Christian from Him.

Rom. 8:36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

After listing Christian experiences in verse 35 (tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, etc.), Paul used Psalm 44:22 to show that the properly instructed Christian realizes not only that the call is narrow, but that it is a calling to suffer. If we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him (Rom. 8:17). If we do not suffer and have tribulation, we are illegitimate (Heb. 12:8). Our calling includes these experiences so that we will be developed in Christlikeness. To some extent, the degree of our faithfulness has a bearing on whether we have the mark of true discipleship.

A lamb is raised in preparation for the final slaughter; that is, all conditions prepare the animal for that end. Our experience as Christians is similar. We consecrate to die, but we die *daily* in preparation for our ultimate actual death. Realizing our Heavenly Father’s watch-care and interest helps us to be submissive and obedient. Being continually dead to the world and to self is described as, “We are killed all the day long.” Incidentally, if trouble arises in an ecclesia, the Adversary wants to distract us from our real objective and to preoccupy us with the problem.

Only those who *truly love God to the fullest* will die “all the day long.” Sacrifices under the Law were strictly obedience *in works*—the discharge of a *duty*—and were not really related to love. Paul said, “The love of Christ constraineth us,” for Christians appreciate the *character* of God and His dear Son, whereas Jews under the Law concentrated on justice and the moral precepts of right versus wrong (2 Cor. 5:14).

Rom. 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Christians who have this *degree* of faith will be of the Little Flock; that is, they will be “more than conquerors.” Nothing can separate them from the love of God.

Rom. 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Rom. 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul took an optimistic approach. If a person has an outlook of nothing but gloom in everything he teaches about the Lord, not only will his converts be fewer in number, but not as many of them will be faithful. We all need encouragement, exhortation, and brethren who pray for us. We need the brotherhood to round us out and help us in time of need, spiritually speaking. Therefore, Paul took the approach “I am persuaded....”

If we see someone who is enthusiastic, that enthusiasm rubs off on us. If someone is cheerful and happy, that attitude makes us feel good, and we enjoy the visit. Seeing Paul’s example of suffering and zeal in counting all things loss and dross for the kingdom of heaven’s sake helped others who lost property, goods, health, etc.

Paul was persuaded that neither death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, nor any other creature could separate the Christian from the love of God in Christ Jesus. The category of “angels” includes both fallen angels and false “angels,” or messengers. “Principalities” are evil institutions and governments both in heaven and down here. A saying is, “You can’t fight city hall.” We must resist not just Satan himself but all of the fallen angels and not join them in any way, including the earthly governments they work through. The term “powers” refers to the capabilities of Satan and the fallen angels. The Adversary probably caused the storm on the Sea of Galilee because Jesus *rebuked* the wind and the waves (Matt. 8:26). Although Jesus was the Savior, when he was asleep in the boat, Satan thought he could accomplish dirty work, but that evil was overruled and frustrated. And of course God knew about the incident before it ever happened.

Comment: We are reminded of Romans 3:4, “Let God be true, but every man a liar.” Like Jeremiah, we may feel that we are all alone and the whole world is against us.

Reply: Luther had that experience when he was called before the Diet at Worms and had to defend the truth. He manifested great courage under that situation.

Comment: Fallen angels, principalities, and powers are especially busy now, at the end of the Gospel Age, trying to deceive us.

Paul continued with the categories of “things present” and “things to come,” for down the road persecuting experiences will come. The categories of “height” and “depth” refer to the heights of exaltation and the depths of despair. We speak of a high, where one gets a false exhilaration that leads to pride and associated dangers, and there is also the depth of despondency, where one gives up on his consecration. Anyone who realizes what God has done for us in our present state should reverence Him in true humility. How miraculous it is for each of us to have the marvelous light of understanding even a little about God, His Word, and His plan!

Neither shall “any other creature” be able to separate us from God’s love. In other words, no other human being, even our closest family member, or a favorite pet or animal shall come

between us and our love for God *unless we allow it.*

As expressed by the Prophet Isaiah, the Bible is written in a way that either it can be beautifully understood by one who has the Holy Spirit or it can be easily misunderstood (Isa. 28:10,13). For that reason, we need to prove all things in the Word of God by two or three witnesses. This point has not been mentioned strongly or frequently enough because many become very convinced about the meaning of Scriptures yet have a warped view of the statements being made. Verses 38 and 39 could be wholeheartedly accepted by Universal Reconciliationists, or Universal Salvationists, who believe that all will be saved, even Satan. They believe in a plan of God in which all will eventually be saved, and they think the wonderful “mystery” is God’s great love. As brilliant as Paul was in these statements, which are part of the Word of God, other Scriptures have to be considered in order to reason properly and not overread or underread the statements. We should want to understand *exactly what God intended* in each Scripture *in harmony and balance with the rest of His Word.* With much being written or said about God and Jesus in the media—with Scriptures even being quoted—the uninformed public become convinced in their own erroneous reasoning, believing it is justified by the Word of God. Even the Apostle Paul’s definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13 needs further explanation. The chapter sounds beautiful and comprehensive because it mentions the attributes of love in action, but something is obviously missing because the negative aspects were not included. It is important to realize that Paul did not say chapter 13 is the whole story in defining love.

Verses 38 and 39 contain two safety features that help us to not read inordinately what Paul stated. “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” One safety feature is the omission of “self” in the list of external influences that cannot make a Christian fail and succumb to pressures. The phrase “nor any *other* creature” excludes self. The second qualification is the phrase “in Christ Jesus.” We have to be *in Jesus* and be knowledgeable and informed. If we are truly in him, we have nothing else to fear except self. For instance, if we are in Jesus, we do not have the love of money because we follow the admonition to “seek ... first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). Reputation, fame, money, etc., become meaningless.

We have to reason on these statements. In two or three other places in this epistle, many Christians have gotten strange ideas about love by not balancing the statements with other Scriptures. Thus “nor any other creature” and “in Christ Jesus” are important inclusions in verse 39 to help us properly understand the meaning. Incidentally, there is a balance: we must struggle against self yet not look too much to self, or we will become discouraged.

Even the liberal thinking in politics today is based on love. The thinking is that if someone says, “I am sorry,” he is excused, no matter what the nature of the sin is. False love permeates society, but if we are in Christ Jesus and examine self, we can hopefully avoid these dangers.

Rom. 9:1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

“I say the truth in Christ” is like Jesus’ saying, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” Paul continued, “I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit.” He also spoke of examining himself “to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). It is difficult to develop a conscience that bears us proper witness. If we are an introvert by nature, we usually judge ourselves very harshly, and sometimes our judging has a negative effect in the sense that we become dispirited. However, if we are an extrovert by nature, the danger is in being overconfident. Thus one extreme is to be too self-deprecating,

and the other is to be too self-confident. A balance between the two extremes is what we need to achieve. A conscience void of offense is one that is tender and not seared.

Rom. 9:2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

Paul had “great heaviness and continual sorrow” in his heart for the Jewish people, his brethren, his fellow Jews. For Paul to make this statement was very meaningful, for it showed his concern for his kinsmen. His purpose in writing the Book of Hebrews was different from that in this epistle, for there he took an intellectual approach to try to get through to the mind of fellow Jews by refuting all their inhibitions against the acceptance of Christ. One by one, he settled the difficulties they have by nature in a walk of faith in Jesus. The Book of Hebrews was like a swan song at the end of his earthly life, for he wanted to leave a legacy for the Jewish people. Paul spent his life for the brotherhood of Christ, laying down his life day after day, but he left a legacy for the Jewish nation, so they have no excuse for not accepting Christ. Here in Romans, Paul’s “great heaviness and continual sorrow” were because the Jews were almost all blind to accepting Christ.

Rom. 9:3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

Paul wished that he could be “accursed from Christ” if his Jewish brethren in the flesh would accept Christ. We are reminded of the sentiments of Moses, who was willing to be blotted out if the nation could be saved (Exod. 32:32). We often equate Moses and Paul, one living in the Jewish Age and the other in the Gospel Age.

Comment: The *Diaglott* reads, “On account of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh; (for I myself was wishing to be accursed from the Anointed One;).” This translation sounds as if Paul was referring to the earlier time when he opposed Christ.

Reply: Paul’s conscience troubled him because of his previous persecution of Christians.

The following is a paraphrase of what Paul was saying in verses 1-3. “I am telling the truth, and God is my witness. My conscience bears witness that I have in my heart heaviness and sorrow, for there was a time I thought of Christ as anathema (before I believed in Jesus).” Not only did Paul once persecute Christians, but he influenced his people, the Jews, especially the religious leaders, and helped to delude them. Now Paul wanted to lay down his life for his brethren, hoping to make amends for what he had done and to get the Jews to believe. Such was his driving force!

Paul’s love and concern for the Jews were the epitome of *agape* love in the way that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God’s primary purpose was the treasure in the field, but He also loved the field and the animals. His plan will change the bestial behavior of men toward creatures they can brutalize.

Rom. 9:4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Paul was trying to undercut the difficulties that existed not only in the Truth movement of his time—jealousies, quarrels, and bitterness among the Jewish and Gentile brethren—but also with the outside Jews, who were not believers. He mentioned privileges the Jews had: the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the service of God, and the promises. Regarding the “adoption,” Christ came to the nation of Israel at his First Advent. Jews first had

the privilege to become sons of God instead of servants. “Glory” refers to the *shekinah* glory, which was a *real* light to them. The “covenants” (plural) are the Abrahamic, Sarah, (old) Law, and New Law covenants. The “giving of the law” occurred at Mount Sinai when the Ten Commandments were engraved on two stone tablets. Phenomena of nature—lightning, thunder, and an earthquake—accompanied the giving of the Law. Before this event, the Israelites had been following an “unseen” God, but at Mount Sinai, God spoke, as it were. The “service of God” includes the Tabernacle, the Temple of Solomon, the Temple of Zerubbabel (enlarged to become Herod’s Temple), and even the Third Temple of the future. The nation received “promises” along temporal lines if they obeyed and also along spiritual lines in regard to a coming faithful Redeemer.

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

Another privilege of the Jews was “the fathers”—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The great ones of earth were Jews, of whom Jesus was the greatest. Their whole history was one of renown.

The wording of verse 5 seems to support the Trinitarian view. The Revised Standard is preferable: “To them [the Jews] belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen.” The insertion of a period after “Christ” helps to separate God and Jesus.

What advantages did Israel have? Paul listed them. Christ was the last of the patriarchs, and the Jews also had God (Jehovah), who is above all. The advantages led all the way up to *Jehovah*, the God of all. What blessings the Jews had!

Rom. 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

The Word of God is accomplishing what it is supposed to do, even though only a tiny minority of Jews accepted Jesus. In view of Paul’s reasoning (God’s instruction), the Word of God has not been nullified just because the majority did not accept Christ. All the evil does not belie the fact there is a God. *Only faith* can surmount all the problems. In other words, it would appear that with all this instruction, the results are meager and God is losing but *no!* His purpose is *to call a class of faith*—and a person can only be tested and persecuted in a climate of doubt in the world.

God is calling a class, the Israel of God, yet almost all Jews reject Christ. Hence it would seem that God’s Word has no effect, but the faithful remnant is just what God foreknew would happen. And because there is only a remnant, God calls Gentiles. Paul was laying the premise for God’s calling some from *many* nations. The reasoning will continue.

Comment: “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” was a hard statement for the Jewish Christians. Paul went back to Abraham, before the giving of the Law, to the seed of Jacob, the beginning of the nation of Israel.

Reply: Yes, that is especially true, when the next verse is considered.

Rom. 9:7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Paul was changing from the Law aspect to Abraham, saying there was a selective promise within the broader promise “to thee and thy seed.” In other words, who was the “seed”? Both

here and in Galatians, Paul particularized with regard to the Isaac seed. “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” He was quoting Genesis 21:12, where God said to Abraham, “Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” The Jews would have understood this mention of Isaac. Paul was beginning to show the scope of the Creator’s plan and lay the premise that this blessing seed would include both Jews and Gentiles.

Rom. 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

“They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God.” Paul frequently used the word “not” in an accommodated sense. Here he meant that Abraham’s natural children of the flesh were *not necessarily* the children of God. In the Jewish thinking and writing, that modification is not inserted, even though it is implied in most cases. Jews felt that the promise was theirs, but only those of *Isaac* are the children of God for the heavenly promise, not the children who came through Hagar or Keturah.

“But the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” Pictures (or types) elsewhere in Scripture help us to understand these things. The Jew in Paul’s day would have had trouble grasping this concept and had to accept it by faith—at first.

Rom. 9:9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

Rom. 9:10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;

Paul brought in two women, Sarah and Rebecca. In both cases, God favored one son over another. With Sarah, Isaac was favored over Ishmael, the son of the concubine Hagar, and with Rebecca, Jacob was favored over Esau.

“For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come.” What “time”? Sarah was in the tent when three angels appearing as men said she would conceive in her old age (Gen. 18:1,2,9-11). With Abraham being impotent and Sarah in her nineties, this promise seemed to be an impossibility. Sarah laughed for a moment with the shock of faith. But “through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised” (Heb. 11:11). The Genesis account reads, “Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh” (Gen. 18:12-15). The promise made “at this time” was that after nine months, Sarah would have a son.

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

Verse 11 is parenthetical, as though to say it should be connected to verse 10, “And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac.” Her children, Jacob and Esau, being not yet born, had done neither any good nor any evil. The prescience of God, His foreknowledge, is seen here in that His purpose “according to election might stand, not of works, but of him [God] that calleth.” The calling was “not of works” because prior to

their birth, God had predetermined to honor Jacob above Esau.

Paul was emphasizing grace versus works. The honoring of Jacob over Esau did not depend on goodness or works but on *election and grace*. Accordingly, God does not call us on the basis of justice. Rather, He calls those He is *pleased* to call. This is *His prerogative*, and we must honor it. Being called is not based on either works or merit.

Rom. 9:12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

Esau, the elder of the two sons, was considered the firstborn. According to the natural custom, he would be given a double inheritance by Isaac, his father, and would thus, by inference, also be in line even for the spiritual blessing. However, Esau rejected the blessing. God expressed the principle to the nation, “If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exod. 19:5,6). The Jewish nation was in line to inherit both the earthly and the spiritual promises. The Law was designed to steer the Jews out of an impossible condition into a *faith* condition. With common sense and a desire to serve God, Jews would have been subconsciously looking for a way of escape that would have His approval. They had the opportunity when Jesus came “unto his own,” but the nation rejected him (John 1:11). Had the nation received Jesus, the call would never have gone to the Gentiles.

Rom. 9:13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated [loved less].” Both were blessed but Jacob more so.

Q: “Hated” is a strong word. Is the meaning more severe than we usually say?

A: We are not accustomed to thinking along that line. Jesus said, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). In other words, to be a disciple of Jesus, we must be in a position, if necessary, to oppose a family member (and even indignantly) and not to humbly submit to doing something contrary to God’s will. Of course it is probably better to modify “hate” to “love less,” for to advocate such a radical feeling might stumble some. Literally, the word is “hate” in the Greek, but a *proper hate* is intended. As David said of God’s enemies, “I hate them with *perfect hatred*: I count them mine enemies” (Psa. 139:22). Because we cannot explain the term “hate” in a few seconds to someone who is unaccustomed to scriptural thinking, we have to use judgment that befits the situation. Similarly, we do not teach calculus to a child because the youngster does not have the mind.

Now we can go back to verse 11 and discuss what is inferentially taught. “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works.” Esau was a hunter, and Isaac considered him to be the doer, the go-getter. Moreover, Isaac enjoyed venison, the fruits of Esau’s exploits. In looking at the two sons, Isaac preferred Esau as the achiever, but in antitype, that son was an example of *works*. To the contrary, Jacob’s disposition was more docile, and he was humble and had faith.

Rom. 9:14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

There is no unrighteousness with God. The principle is that He can do what He wants. God calls those who are rich in faith but *not all* who are rich in faith. We are all nobodies, and there is none righteous. If planet Earth is less than the dust on a scale, what about the people who dwell here? Since God has reasons for what He does, it should not even enter our mind to question Him. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so God’s ways and thoughts are higher than

ours (Isa. 55:9).

Sometimes we have to be humbled, for it is “not by might, nor by power” but by God’s Spirit that we accomplish anything (Zech. 4:6). Those with above-average intellect, wealth, good looks, strength of physique, etc., have to be careful lest they get distracted inordinately from their consecration. Humility is to be cherished. God condescended to say, “Come now, and let us reason together,” but we have to be careful even along that line (Isa. 1:18).

Rom. 9:15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

God said to Moses, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I ... will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” (Exod. 33:19). It is God’s prerogative to have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and compassion on whom He will have compassion. And that prerogative should not be questioned.

Rom. 9:16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.

It is not the desire to know God by itself, but God’s *choice* of whom He will honor. The whole human race is condemned under Justice, so God can honor whom He will. For one to get into the race for the high calling, certain procedures are necessary. (1) *God* must select the candidate. (2) When the candidate enters the race, he is to run toward that *one* goal. (3) It is not the capability or the wishes of the runner, even though they are factors, but *God* who does the honoring. (4) The candidates, or runners in the race, must always be *humble*. For example, it is good to desire to be an elder, but that desire is not always fulfilled. *Always keeping God’s grace* in mind helps to keep us humble.

Even though we are to run as though only one gets the prize and Paul said, “So run,” that does not mean we will get the prize (1 Cor. 9:24). The more-than-conquerors have that something extra in them, whereby they seem to do the impossible. For example, a runner may feel he will die in the extra exertion he puts in to win the race—and sometimes he collapses immediately after crossing the finish line—but that is the difference between a champion and just a good, fast runner. God shows *mercy* in allowing one to enter the race for the high calling, and having entered, the individual is instructed *how* to run; that is, he is to run with his whole heart, mind, soul, and strength.

“So then it is not of him that willeth, ... but of God that showeth mercy.” Concentrated effort is required, but whether one gets a crown is up to God in the final analysis.

Rom. 9:17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

With each additional plague, Pharaoh became increasingly hardened in heart, until finally his back was broken, figuratively speaking, when his son died in the tenth plague. Even the animals and statues of leading gods, let alone the firstborn of the entire nation, were adversely affected.

Incidentally, when we were in Luxor, Egypt, and went across the river to Thebes, we saw a giant statue that had fallen down with its head broken. We were reminded of Dagon, the Philistine god that fell over the threshold when the Ark of the Covenant was taken. Anyway, the statue in Egypt was so large that human beings could not have pushed it over.

How did God raise up the Pharaoh before whom Moses and Aaron subsequently stood? Of the different individuals who would qualify for the office, God used His foreknowledge to read their characters. Then, by the process of elimination and without interfering with free moral agency, He made sure the individual with the disposition that would resist Him would become the Pharaoh. God allows the permission of evil, but He is not responsible for it and does not in any sense condone it. He foresaw what Satan and Adam and Eve would do and simply did not interfere. He chose not to stop the rebellion right away because He saw that the permission of evil would benefit mankind, among others, in the final analysis. Adam was responsible, and Satan and Eve entered into the persuasive aspect of his disobedience.

God's purpose in raising up that particular Pharaoh was to show His power and to declare His name throughout all the earth. And that is what happened. Remember what Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, said to the two Israelite spies: "I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed" (Josh. 2:9,10).

Rahab exercised the little seed of faith that she had and was probably searching for God at the time—perhaps because of her profession as a harlot. She might have felt guilty, just as many of us did before consecration. We felt our need for something. Realizing that we were nothing and that we could not extricate ourselves from our course in life, we humbly bowed before God and saw our need for Jesus. By responding, we got a wonderful deliverance. As we get older and weaker, we wish we had the strength and enthusiasm that we possessed when we originally came into the truth. Life is sobering, and we all have sad experiences to take off the sharp edge. As we become more and more incapable with age, it is comforting to realize the Lord knows our frame (Psa. 103:14). Hopefully, we are growing stronger spiritually every day.

Rom. 9:18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

How does God harden an individual? God provides the circumstance that manifests the disposition, but the individual hardens himself. In other words, God knows how people will react under certain situations.

Rom. 9:19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

Paul knew that when he made the statement of verse 18, those who had the wrong attitude would say, "Why does God yet find fault? Who has resisted His will?" so he nipped their attitude and questions in the bud. The unconverted Jews superficially trusted in Abraham and said, "We believe in God and are trying to serve Him; we have not resisted His will," but they were trying to serve God *in their own way*. They felt Paul's sermonizing did not apply to them. Even the true Jewish Christians had to be careful they did not consider themselves superior to the Gentile Christians because of background and training.

Rom. 9:20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

"Shall the thing formed say to him [God] that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" This principle is illustrated in other ways in the natural world. For instance, some people are born blind or lame because of a genetic disorder, and they complain. Instead of being happy that

they even have life, the very complaint is a judgment against God. Thus some question God, especially in a time of emotional trauma.

The whole human race was sold under sin through Adam, and problems occur because of his sin. It is hard for the unconsecrated person to accept the fact that none of Adam's posterity are born with the right to life. Only Adam had a right to life, and even that right was conditional. Those who have wrong thinking are inhibited in their love for God, yet they themselves are responsible for being turned off. Probably 99.9 percent of adults in the United States are aware that a book exists called the Bible, the Word of God. The title itself should be a revelation that evokes the desire for examination, but there is little interest.

We should not debate or find fault with God's methods. Faith says regarding matters we do not understand, "I do not know, but God's way is right." For example, when God commanded that *all* men, women, and children of an enemy should be killed, the command was in harmony with His attributes of love, wisdom, justice, and power.

Paul was trying to settle the problem of Jews' thinking that God's favor comes from works and obedience to the Law and its ceremonial functions. This was their idea of righteousness, but Paul said they would *never* obtain life through works. We are objects of God's *grace and election*, and we are *justified by faith*. Then, and only then, can we *follow faith with works*.

Rom. 9:21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

God does not coerce the will, but knowing the end from the beginning, He knew how Pharaoh would react to certain experiences and mercies. And He knew that the genes and hereditary factors of Pharaoh's family would make him useful. Hence God was not morally responsible for Pharaoh's actions, and He wanted to show His power and mercy.

As an illustration in nature, the sun influences anything it shines on. The same sun can melt wax but harden clay. The sun is not responsible for what happens, for the result depends on the material. And so God's providences would have softened another individual, but they hardened this particular Pharaoh.

The "clay," the "same lump," is the human race, the whole human family. Both Jews and Gentiles are "clay." Of this clay lump, the Potter has the prerogative to make one vessel of honor and another vessel of less honor.

Whether one was a Jew or a Gentile was not important. God was trying to humiliate both to realize that all need mercy and that He calls both. The "Isaac seed" is important. The called of the Gospel Age will end up in one of three ways: with honor in the Little Flock, with less honor in the Great Company, or in destruction (Second Death).

In this instance, we think of the Potter from a futuristic standpoint—from the standpoint of the destiny of man rather than his birth. God has set certain conditions. Even before Jesus came at his First Advent, there was a calling to the Jewish people, and any stranger who was in Israel at that time could become a proselyte. Then came the Gospel Age, and the good news has gone quite extensively throughout the world. Bible and tract societies have done a reasonable job in spreading the Word of God in nations outside the pale of Christendom, and how people react and obey does have an influence on their destiny. Even with noble people—whether they are in Asia, America, Africa, or elsewhere—if they try to be just and fair in their dealings with fellow man, their efforts will do some good, for they are reaping a character. The Potter recognizes character, and in the Kingdom Age how people react to His molding will form a

destiny. The love of God is far grander than mankind realizes.

Rom. 9:22 What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

God has exercised patient endurance in not showing wrath on vessels “fitted to destruction,” that is, on vessels predisposed to destruction through wrong character. Such persons were not fit to start with, Pharaoh being an example, for he had already developed an evil disposition. God did not destroy Pharaoh immediately, even though the ruler merited destruction, but showed wisdom in bringing out this evil disposition. In the final analysis, the situation worked to God’s honor. Although God’s providence overruled so that Pharaoh came to power, He was not responsible for the ruler’s reactions.

There are both inner and outer workings. Outer providences occur, but the individual must decide how to respond to God’s Word. In the natural application, in the type, the destruction pertained to Pharaoh. In the spiritual application, in the antitype, the destruction will apply to Satan. Pharaoh might get life in the future Kingdom Age, but he pictures Satan, who is doomed to destruction. Pharaoh died in the Red Sea with the hosts of Egypt, who tried to pursue the Israelites (Psa. 136:15). In the larger picture of the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea represents the end of the Kingdom Age, when Satan will lead some to Second Death in the Little Season.

Incidentally, God’s providence is not limited to individuals, for it can extend to nations as well. This principle applies at the present time, for the way is being prepared for the great Time of Trouble.

Rom. 9:23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

Again Paul alluded to the predestination of a class to be conformed to the image of God’s dear Son (see Rom. 8:29). While all things are possible with God, we think He forbears to exercise some things. On a much lower scale, we also elect not to exercise certain prerogatives and capabilities for various reasons. Paul was not saying that God could not foreknow the individuals but that He did not predetermine who they would be. It is very hard to draw the fine line between extreme foreknowledge and predestination. Several Scriptures are needed to define that line and to be sure the Calvinist view is not correct.

Rom. 9:24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

The question that started in verse 22 ends with verse 24: “What if God ... endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: ... that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” Of course Paul was addressing a mixed audience of Christians that consisted of both Jews and Gentiles.

Rom. 9:25 As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.

Hosea prophesied that God would one day change His dealings (Hos. 2:23). Those recognized as His people (the Jews) would be cast off, and those not His people (the Gentiles) would become His people. Paul backed up with Scripture each point that he made.

Rom. 9:26 And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not

my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

Again Paul quoted a Scripture to justify his statement that Gentiles would be called (Hos. 1:10). Under the new dispensation, they were called and put on an equal footing with the Jews.

Rom. 9:27 Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved:

What was Paul's reason for quoting Isaiah 10:22,23? "For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord GOD of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land." Paul used this quote about only a remnant being saved to encourage the Christian Jews and to show that they should not be dismayed because the majority of Jews rejected Jesus. God foreknew that only a minority would accept His Son.

Paul took every conceivable argument to show why *faith* is the way. He considered the Law versus faith and anticipated questions. He could give both sides of the issue because of his previous condition and thinking as a Jew.

Q: Can verse 27 also refer to the Holy Remnant?

A: Yes. The context in Isaiah 10 refers to the remnant at the end of the age. Paul was leading up to his reasoning in chapter 11, which shows that when the full number of the Gentiles is come in, then Israel (the Holy Remnant) will be saved. He customarily used Old Testament Scriptures to extrapolate principles. However, as is true here, the principle is only a *partial* fulfillment. Although down through the Gospel Age, the great number of Jews were cast off and only a small number accepted Christ, the numbers in Paul's day were not quite as lopsided. The statements he made were designed by the Holy Spirit to be beneficial throughout the age. That way Christians in all periods would gain profitable information but not necessarily the full understanding depending on what part of the age they lived in. Prophecies are understood more and more clearly as time progresses.

Q: Is the thought that Isaiah 10:22,23 refers to the end-of-the-age deliverance of the Holy Remnant and that Paul used the principle in a spiritual sense here in Romans?

A: Yes, stated succinctly, that is what we are saying. The comparison with the sand of the sea is of an innumerable number versus a very small and limited number.

Rom. 9:28 For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.

The principle is that God will not make a full end of Israel, especially at the end of the age. Most people who are pro-Israel see that of the host of Gog and Magog coming down against Israel in Jacob's Trouble, a great multitude will perish, but many do not realize that a great number of Jews will also perish at that time with only a remnant being saved. Jesus said of the Time of Trouble, "If those days were not cut short, *no flesh* would survive" (Matt. 24:22 paraphrase). The same principle applies to Jacob's Trouble. Without divine intervention, all would be extinguished, particularly with the materialization of the fallen angels. When the trouble has done its perfecting work of purging, God will say, "Enough." Those who survive will be the class God is looking for; namely, the Holy Remnant, who will be saved on that occasion in that locale in a special handpicked sense.

God "will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness." At the end of the Jewish Age, He

finished the account with Israel *in righteousness*. God had dealt exclusively with the Jews in the past, but now, as Paul showed, He would deal with the Gentiles who accepted Jesus. At the end of the 70 weeks, the old way came to an abrupt end. *In principle*, God cut the work short in righteousness. In other words, the Christian Jews in Paul's day, to whom he was writing, applied cutting the work "short in righteousness" to the trouble of AD 70, but the larger picture pertains to Jacob's Trouble and the saving of the Holy Remnant. The same explanation applies to the end of verse 28: "A short work will the Lord make upon the earth."

The Scriptures were sometimes worded in a way that requires very, very careful reading in order to understand the specific time application. At times, God purposely worded His message so that it would be misunderstood by those He did not want to get the information. The Prophet Isaiah said that God writes "with stammering lips," and with "another tongue will he speak to this people" (Isa. 28:11). God's purpose is to stumble those who are wise in their own conceits, yet that "stammering" message is a meaningful revelation to the humble class.

Rom. 9:29 And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

The title "Lord of Sabaoth," meaning "Lord of hosts," refers to God (compare Isaiah 1:9). Again Paul brought in the thought of a small remnant, for there were only three survivors of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot and his two daughters. If it were not for the faithful remnant at the First Advent, the Jews would have been cut off sooner and not have had the last 3 1/2 years of favor of the seventieth week.

Rom. 9:30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

Although the Scriptures favored only Israel for a long time, and although the oracles of God were committed to the custody of the Israelites and were for their interest and welfare, yet sprinkled in the Old Testament are admonitions that a time would come when the favorable situation would change and others would benefit from their loss. In summation, the Gentiles would come into the Church and be dealt with on the basis of *faith*.

Rom. 9:31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

The Jews were deceived by the Law, for they did not see that although the Law was good, *faith* was needed. Also, they overlooked prophecies that showed a change of dispensation was coming. Christ is the *only* way to God.

Rom. 9:32 Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

Rom. 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

The Jews thought that by doing the works of the Law, particularly the ceremonial aspects, they were justified and would inherit the promises. Whether the ceremonial part of the Law was obeyed in a perfunctory or a meticulous fashion—and even if the heart and the spirit of the individual were right and one was very careful to follow the instructions—the Jews were not absolved from their sins.

Moreover, Israel "stumbled at that stumblingstone," for as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion a

stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on *him* shall not be ashamed” (see Isa. 28:16). The pronoun “him” indicates that Israel would stumble because of an *individual*. The last thing the people thought was that the individual would be the Messiah, for they believed that when Messiah came, everyone would believe. They did not realize that there were two advents and that at the First Advent, only a tiny minority of Jews would accept him. Jesus “came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). The Jews stumbled because of Jesus of Nazareth. When he manifests himself at the *epiphania* and *apokalupsis* of the Second Advent, all will be believers. The Jews do not see the nuances of the application of Scripture. The different gradations can be easily misunderstood.

“Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed [confounded].” From among men, God calls a spiritual class to follow Christ, the perfect pattern, a Jew of *literal* Zion (Israel). The prophecies indicated that when Messiah came at the First Advent, the majority would be stumbled, and only a minority would believe on him. The last ten or so verses of this ninth chapter emphasize that mighty few of Israel would accept God’s truth, not only at the First Advent but also during the *parousia*, or secret presence of the Second Advent. However, once Jesus manifests himself, all will believe. We feel the Scriptures indicate that the Crucifixion scene will be seen at the time God delivers the Holy Remnant out of Jacob’s Trouble. “All Israel”—all Jews who are alive at that time—will be saved. The exact *timing* of Romans 11:26 has to be understood for a proper application.

Christ was a stumbling stone in three ways to both nominal houses of Israel: (1) the *presence*; (2) *humility*, which is necessary for acceptance of the presence; and (3) the *Cross* of Christ. At the First Advent, the Jews did not see the need for Messiah to *suffer*. The Scriptures taught, “Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree” (Deut. 21:22,23 paraphrase). Moreover, they expected their Messiah to be a warrior who was educated and strong, not one who was uneducated and meek. At the Second Advent, the *Ransom* is a stumbling stone to nominal Christians, who follow a *social* gospel and do not understand consecration *unto death*. The implication is that true Christians would be misunderstood and in the minority but would not be put to shame if they held to their convictions, for ultimately they will receive honor and glory.

Romans 9:1-15

Before continuing, we will review part of the ninth chapter from a little different perspective.

Verses 1 and 2: “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.”

Verses 3-5: “For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

Verses 6 and 7: “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.”

Verse 8: “That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”

Verse 9: “For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Verse 10: “And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;”

Verses 11 and 12: “(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.”

Verse 13: “As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

Verse 14: “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.”

Verse 15: “For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

Verses 1-15 were read to get the mood, but verses 11 and 12 are our particular focus. Notice the clauses “the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil.” That reasoning makes sense, for children not yet born could not be held responsible or accountable for actions that have not taken place. The children were not accountable “that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him [God] that calleth.” Paul then added, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

When Isaac married Rebecca, two twin sons were born, Jacob and Esau. Subsequently, the character of the sons was manifested as they grew to manhood. Considering the natural more important, Esau did not sufficiently appreciate the spiritual promise but sold it for a meal, and Jacob, who manifested faith, inherited the promise. Although Jacob deserved the promise, the problem was that Esau was the firstborn, and this factor, among others, made Isaac favor him.

Part of the Law states, “If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his” (Deut. 21:15-17). These verses show that Isaac was not prejudiced, for according to the Law, God’s thinking given subsequently, Esau should get the inheritance of the firstborn. Therefore, Isaac was doing the right thing in wanting to give Esau the blessing, for even though Esau was worldly and Jacob was good, the former was the firstborn twin. Why, then, did Rebecca use the ruse of putting a hairy goat skin on Jacob’s arms, so that Isaac in his old age with poor eyesight would be deceived into thinking he was giving the blessing to Esau?

Before the twin sons were born, God favored the younger one by telling Rebecca, “The elder shall serve the younger” (Gen. 25:23). Thus the second-born was favored to receive the blessing of the firstborn, but this choice was not predestination, for God could foresee the characters of the two brothers when they would reach maturity. People who study genetics can foresee in the fetal stage that there is a medicinal predilection or liability to develop certain diseases, syndromes, and malfunctions, but they cannot foresee character. However, since the genes are coded with the predilection of a type of character, God can make the right choice in advance. From a superficial standpoint, man might consider such a choice to be predestination, but God can see the end from the beginning. Thus, having the capability of not only intuition but also prescience, the ability to foresee things as they actually will happen, God had a solid and very logical reason for favoring Jacob. To have this appreciation for God’s capability whittles away or negates the thought of predestination, and we realize by faith that God’s choice of the 144,000 is based on *character development*. Some brethren and many scholars have

had difficulty with the concept of predestination, whereas others accept God's choice with simple faith. When we begin to reason on details of Scripture, it is important to realize about Isaac's character and how, based on obedience to God's will as stated in Deuteronomy, he was reluctant to favor Jacob, the second-born son.

Comment: The same principle applies to the Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus.

Reply: Yes, through genetics, God could foresee how the character of that man would develop in time. Therefore, He overruled that the individual with the tendency toward being stubborn and authoritative would succeed to the throne of Egypt. God knew in advance how that Pharaoh would react and would not want his will crossed. The bottom line is that God's choice, from either a negative or a positive standpoint, is based on character.

Comment: Perhaps with Jacob, God also had a type in mind to show that Israel, the firstborn, would serve the Gentiles, the second-born.

Reply: That lesson can be extrapolated, although here in Romans, Paul's main theme was faith and works.

Rom. 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Rom. 10:2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Paul commended the zeal of the Jew, but their zeal was "not according to knowledge." Evangelical Christians fall into the same category. Many have great zeal and are very confident and positive with regard to their consecration and loyalty to Christ, but their zeal is not according to required knowledge.

Rom. 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

"God's righteousness" is the righteousness of *faith*, which requires humility. The Jews tried to establish their *own* righteousness. To please God, we must not have preconceived opinions but must examine the Bible and submit to the instruction. Submission to the righteousness of God is *humility*. Humility, honesty, and hunger are all necessary for a Christian, as well as a willingness to be instructed by God.

Rom. 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

For Paul to make this statement shows that his personal conviction was immovable. Christ is indeed "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The uninstructed Jewish hearer needed to be nourished little by little with the reasoning in this epistle. If he assimilated what Paul said in chapter 1 through this current verse, then he had enough information and understanding for a personal conviction that Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness.

Christ fulfilled the Law—he "ended" it—for those Jews who accept him; otherwise, the Jews are still under the Law and are obliged and responsible to keep it. Thus a paraphrase of verse 4 is, "Christ is the fulfillment of the Law Covenant to every Jew who believes in him." The Law was designed to bring the nation of Israel to Christ. Jesus said, "Till heaven and earth pass, not one jot or one tittle of the Law will fail until all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18 paraphrase).

Rom. 10:5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

Stated succinctly, God's words to the nation of Israel were, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD" (Lev. 18:5). Jews who think they are fulfilling the Law by obeying the ceremonial features have a false sense of righteousness. With the rich young ruler, Jesus zeroed in on the Decalogue, rather than on the ceremonial law (Matt. 19:16-22). Just as the young ruler replied, "All these things have I kept from my youth up," so many unthinkingly overspeak.

Rom. 10:6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)

Rom. 10:7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

Rom. 10:8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

Paul said, "The word [of faith, which we preach] is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." But why did he mention ascending into heaven or descending into the deep to bring Christ?

Comment: Paul was saying, "It is not necessary to speak to Christ personally on this matter of justification by faith, for you have God's Word, which should convict you."

Reply: To minimize truth, some people use sarcasm with statements like the following: "That is what *you* say, but what does Christ say? Who is going to ascend to heaven to find out? Or who is going into the grave, where his body lay?" This type of cynical or sarcastic reasoning by an unbeliever is very appealing and powerful; it is a form of higher criticism that usually turns a person off and stops investigation.

Comment: A cross-reference is Deuteronomy 30:12-14, "It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

Reply: In other words, an individual does not need to send an embassy to a far country, up to heaven, or down in the pit, for the Word is right here before his eyes.

The Jews had the benefit of the prophecies, the Law, and the testimony of the Old Testament (Isa. 8:20). If they had been diligent in studying the Old Testament, then immediately when Paul started to mention these quotations, they would have said, "Why yes. What he is saying is true." The truth was in front of them. As they mused on these things in their hearts, they would have thought about Paul's unusual application for these Scriptures. If they had been in the right heart condition, the fact that the Scriptures were to the point and made sense would have brought out and enhanced their inherent faith, and they could have laid hold on these promises. In addition, the testimony of the historical record was available because, with the First Advent being only 20 to 30 years in the past, the ministry of Jesus Christ was known at the time of the writing of this epistle. Certainly all Israel knew what he had done.

The principle of verses 6-8 can be applied today. If a problem of interpretation occurs, one might say, "If only Bro. Russell were here to help us!" but that reasoning is wrong. Likewise, one of the consecrated might say, "Oh, if only someone could go to heaven and get Jesus, we would know for sure," but that is not necessary, for the doctrine of faith is right here with us. Supplementary proof and eyewitness accounts are not necessary.

Paul was reasoning with the Jews: "Gentiles are pleasing God because of their heart attitude and because they believe Christ. If you, too, want to please God, just realize that you can be justified by *faith* based on your heart desire. You need clarification of mind. Just reflect on the proper Scriptures and you will see."

Rom. 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Rom. 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Verse 10 expresses a very important truth, which Paul used in the context of justification by faith. The apostles James and Paul both spoke about faith and works, and their reasoning can be harmonized. Paul said that we are justified by faith, not works, and James said that faith without works is dead (Rom. 3:28; James 2:20,26). Both were correct, for a *living* faith produces works unto salvation. Works do not produce righteousness and salvation, but they manifest a living and meaningful faith in that one confesses his beliefs with the mouth. Unfortunately, many feel that being a silent believer—believing in the heart only—is sufficient. God expects us to preach and witness according to our capability.

Comment: For the same reason, an immersion service is important.

Reply: Yes, that service is a confession. Jesus was immersed, and if we are followers of him, it is logical that we should do likewise.

A tendency among Jewish Christians was to believe in Jesus secretly, but if they were fully persuaded, they should have preached *boldly*, for unconfessed faith is weak and pleasing to the flesh. If they confessed their faith, they would ultimately be vindicated and rewarded.

Comment: A preacher asked, "If someone accused you of being a Christian, could he find evidence to prove you guilty?"

Reply: That observation is much to the point. It was said of Daniel, "We can find no fault with him except in his worship of his God" (Dan. 6:5 paraphrase). He certainly witnessed in Babylon.

Rom. 10:11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Here again Paul was referring to Jesus. If the Jews believed on him and his message, they would not be ashamed, and they would be saved.

Isaiah 28:16 reads, "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." The one in whom belief is centered is Jesus, the "tried stone," the "sure foundation." We are to count the cost and not consecrate in haste (Luke 14:27-30). If we count the cost, the step of consecration, which is taken *for life*, will not be regretted subsequently.

Rom. 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over

all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Paul repeated this lesson many times in this epistle. Certainly anyone with a hearing ear should have been convinced from a scriptural standpoint that Christian Jews and Gentiles are alike. All have sinned, and God freely justifies all who believe in Jesus. “The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”

Rom. 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Rom. 10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

Rom. 10:15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Verse 13 can be misunderstood. There are two types of saving, one of which is being saved from ignorance (or from not hearing). Paul reasoned, “How can one hear and understand unless somebody is sent?” The implication is that God uses human instruments to instruct those who are yearning in their heart to know about Him. Then it is up to the individual to recognize the call when it comes. Some who got the truth in a very remarkable fashion testify that their prayers were answered. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord is saved from sin to *conditional* life. One Scripture alone cannot be used as a motto; the subject has to be studied as a whole.

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” If people who are searching for God have a heart of faith, they believe He will answer their prayer and send someone, for they know they cannot of themselves come to that understanding. Many Scriptures prove this statement. For instance, “The eyes of the LORD ... run to and fro through the whole earth,” seeking those who have a seriously inquiring mind (Zech. 4:10).

“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” In quoting Isaiah 52:7, Paul properly applied it *in principle*. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet [a class in the Kingdom Age, the representatives] of him [Jehovah] that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” The Isaiah context is a Kingdom setting, which is quite different from the way Paul used the Scripture here in Romans. He was indicating that God’s *method* is to inform those who truly hunger and thirst for information. That was our personal experience, as well as the experience of many others—probably the majority of Christians.

Prior to the Gospel Age, it was not necessary to enlighten Israel about the Messiah. However, Paul was saying that once Messiah was sent, Jews who accepted him had to personally confess him and preach about him to others. The principle is, “Let those who have a hearing ear hear the truth.” Preaching is a privilege, a joy, and also a *command*.

Returning to Isaiah 52:7, we believe that God will deliver the Holy Remnant out of Jacob’s Trouble when an earthquake splits the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:3-5). Moreover, a succession of miraculous events will occur in a very short period of time. One sixth of Gog, the survivors, will return to their home countries to give personal eyewitness testimonies of the remarkable events in connection with the deliverance of the remnant of Israel from utter destruction (Ezek.

39:1,2). God will intervene to rescue His people as He did in the “day of battle” in the past. The fulfillment of this Scripture will manifest to all the inauguration of the Kingdom.

Paul’s practice of quoting a Scripture out of time context to illustrate a principle was also used by Jesus. When Jesus overturned the tables and cast out the money changers, he said, “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves” (Matt. 21:13). Thus he quoted Isaiah 56:7 at the First Advent to illustrate a principle, yet that Scripture applies to the Third Temple in the Kingdom Age.

Perhaps we should take a moment to read the context of Isaiah 52:7. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem” (Isa. 52:7-9). The tendency is to spiritualize these verses, but a few component parts show that the pertinent application pertains to natural Israel in the near future; namely, “the LORD shall bring again Zion,” “ye waste places of Jerusalem,” “the LORD hath comforted his people,” and “he hath redeemed Jerusalem.” And if we continue, verse 10 states, “The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” The fulfillment of this verse is obviously future. Jehovah’s making “bare his holy arm” will be a manifestation of His anger.

Isaiah 52:7 has been used prominently in regard to the Harvest work of the present-truth movement. That usage is proper *if it is understood as a principle and not as a reality of the fulfillment*. The principle is that we are being moved to proclaim a message which has blessed us. We would like others to know what God has done for us in the forgiving of our sins, and we would like them to know that He has a benevolent purpose. The message of salvation says that not only does God exist, but inherently He has not lost control, no matter what we see happening in the world with the permission of evil.

Comment: Nahum 1:15 quotes part of Isaiah 52:7, “Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.”

Reply: Yes, and again the fulfillment is future.

Rom. 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

Paul was saying, “Do not be discouraged. The fact that the majority do not believe does not mitigate against its being the true message from God. The Scriptures indicate that only a minority will accept Jesus, and this seems to be the story of history.” Paul quoted part of Isaiah 53:1, which prophesied of Jesus’ rejection. “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” Jesus was a man of sorrows, and his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death (Isa. 53:3). With Paul’s answering all arguments and questions to show that Jesus would be rejected, a questioning Christian Jew would be comforted in his acceptance of Christ and in his opposition from unbelieving Jews.

Rom. 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

One must first have a heart of natural faith. Then faith comes by being familiar with and reviewing the Word of God. Faith is different from just believing what a person says. Paul

reasoned that the Bible is the basis of our faith, so the Christian should not worry about what others say and think.

Rom. 10:18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

Now Paul quoted Psalm 19:4 about the heavens, which declare the glory of God. “Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” With the heavens testifying in an international language, everyone should be able to understand that there is a God and that He is the Creator. “The firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge” (Psa. 19:1,2). The sound and the music of that testimony are worldwide, for the heavens can be seen from any part of the globe.

In the highest sense, Psalm 19 is a prophecy of the Kingdom Age. God set a tent in the heavens for the sun, which comes forth like a bridegroom; that is, when the Gospel Age is complete and the Sun (Jesus, The Christ) comes forth and makes known his presence, it will be the dawn of the Kingdom Age (Psa. 19:5). After the marriage of the Lamb takes place, then will come the blessing of the world. As the sun in nature shines forth, declaring day to all people, so when The Christ is in power, all will learn of the good tidings of great joy previously promised. Just as nothing is hidden from the heat of the sun, so all will learn of God’s plan. The Church will be identified with Jesus—all to the glory of God. Thus Paul used the *principle* of a Kingdom Age prophecy to show that all Jews at that time had at least heard about Jesus.

The lesson of Psalm 19 continues. If we want to be identified with the Son now, then just as the planets obey God by staying in orbit, so we must study the Father’s precepts and be obedient to Him and His Word. When we see order, infallibility, and mathematical precision in the heavens, the lesson is that we, as *animate* objects, can (and should) also obey God’s will.

Rom. 10:19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

Rom. 10:20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

Rom. 10:21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Verses 19-21 constitute a beautiful sermon that should humble both Jew and Gentile. “A foolish nation” should be “a foolish people.” The *Diaglott* has “an unenlightened” people; the Gentiles were “foolish” in the sense of not understanding and not being enlightened.

Paul quoted Scripture after Scripture without giving chapter and verse because back there the Hebrew Scriptures were on a scroll without these delineations. He was really addressing the Jews, for the Gentiles were not familiar with the Old Testament. However, the Gentiles gained understanding through the epistle. What an indictment of Israel by God—“All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people”! Unbelieving Jews hated Paul when they heard him make such statements, for they considered him to be a heretic and a traitor. Nevertheless, Paul was not deterred from speaking out. Meanwhile, the Gentiles, not understanding God’s Word, wrested some of Paul’s statements and Scriptures to strengthen their feelings of anti-Semitism.

The Old Testament foretold that God would deal with the Gentiles in due time. Israel’s being called a “disobedient [self-willed] and gainsaying people” is similar to Jesus’ calling the scribes

and Pharisees “whited sepulchres.” We, too, should be bold at times and not too prudent. Paul quoted a portion of Isaiah 65:1-5 to show that the Prophet Isaiah was bold. “I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine’s flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.”

In Romans 11:11, Paul said, “I say then, Have they [the Jews] stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them [the Jews] to jealousy.” When the Jews realize that Jesus is the Messiah and that they lost the chief blessing, they will be provoked to jealousy. They will feel bad that they missed out and that Gentiles obtained the highest reward. *Individuals* (mostly Gentiles) are chosen to make up the new holy “nation,” or priesthood.

Deuteronomy 32:21 tells that Israel provoked God to jealousy by their disobedience and worship of false gods. “They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.” God’s provoking the Jews to jealousy by dealing with the Gentiles will be fully accomplished in the Kingdom, for today the Jews are *angry* at the Gentiles, not jealous of them.

Paul took for granted that the Jews knew their Scriptures and hence quoted many from the Old Testament and many only in part. There is MUCH help for the Jew in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. His letters are *powerful* in logic! Considered “small” from a natural standpoint, Paul was *mighty* in writing and speaking.

Rom. 11:1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.” Earlier Paul used a similar question method with regard to the Law. Is the Law bad? By no means! Paul answered hypercritical Jews, who thought God should have no dealings with Gentiles, by showing that He foretold not only His dealings with the Gentiles but also Israel’s disobedience. Certainly, however, God did not cast off the Israelites forever, for Paul himself was a Jew. An Israelite “of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin,” he had the faith and spirit of an Israelite indeed.

Incidentally, the order, or sequence, of the jewels on the high priest’s breastplate indicates the *honor and rank* of the 12 tribes. The names of the 12 tribes engraved on the two black onyx stones on the shoulder epaulettes show the sequence of *natural birth*. Benjamin and Judah were associated as tribes and were more honorable, generally speaking. The other ten tribes seceded under Jereboam after Solomon’s death.

Rom. 11:2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

“God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.” Not only was the promise given to Abraham, but for more than 1,800 years, the principle for Israel was, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2). “Elias” is the Prophet Elijah.

Rom. 11:3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

Rom. 11:4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

Rom. 11:5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Many of the 7,000 in the Old Testament were from the school of the prophets. When we read verses 1-5, the logical question is, Why did Paul bring up the subject of the 7,000 who did not bow the knee to Baal?

Elijah had said, “Lord, they [the Israelites] have killed thy prophets, and digged down *thine* altars [and replaced them with their *own* altars]; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.” From the perspective of looking over the scene, it appeared that Elijah was 100 percent correct. Jeremiah, too, seemed to be alone, although a few individuals obeyed God’s instructions by repenting and changing their works. Here Paul was saying that the nation of Israel persecuted all of the prophets God sent unto them. In reading this letter from Paul, the Christian Jews in Rome were hearing about their own past history, which should have taken a little air out of the balloon of their feelings of superiority. They looked down on Gentile Christians, who did not know the Law and lacked the Jewish background. The attitude was, “We have been instructed from our youth up, and these newcomers do not even know the God of *Israel*.” However, the honest-hearted Jew listening to Paul should have realized, “A Jew per se has no cause for boasting.” Paul further deflated the Jews by mentioning that Abraham was not even a Jew when he was called, so being of the seed of Abraham did not prove one was great. Abraham had other seed through Hagar and Keturah, but the calling went through Isaac. Therefore, Paul was saying, “You have to analyze God’s calling and dealings.” A large part of the strife he was trying to settle was the Jewish feeling of superiority over the Gentile Christians. The logic Paul used here was a very effective way of deflating such supposed superiority.

While Elijah thought he alone was left, there were actually 7,000 others. Drawing an analogy, Paul said, “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” While the Christian Jew might think of himself as special, the history of Israel shows that the great majority of Jews failed. Therefore, Christian Jews could not use their background as a proof of superiority. In fact, they should fear being identified with forebears who disobeyed the prophets.

In regard to the remnant, we believe Paul was saying that God had a purpose with the Gentiles who were accepting Christ and coming into the early Church. Paul reasoned that God could be doing things the Christian Jews were not aware of as individuals, even though the condition of Israel was as Elijah had described it. The Israelites had killed the true prophets and destroyed God’s altars. With Jeremiah, God pointed out how the Jews had disobeyed the prophets of old, and He said in effect, “If the Jews are flint, I am making you, Jeremiah, an even harder flint so that you can get my message across to my people to wake them up to their situation.” Then God said that in the streets of Jerusalem—that is, out in public—Jeremiah would not find one individual who was faithful. The same situation exists today.

Therefore, in spite of the fact that Elijah thought he was correct in saying he alone was left, God contradicted him. Including Elijah, there were 7,001 faithful individuals. We know about some of the 7,000 in another way because Obadiah helped 100 prophets by hiding them in a cave to protect them from the authorities (1 Kings 18:3,4).

Paul was saying that God knows those who are His, whereas we ourselves are not sure. We cannot say as individuals that we alone have the truth, for God has others of whom we are not aware. We do know that the brethren we meet with have truth, but that does not mean we are the only ones. The mood and attitude of Laodicea is, "We are rich and in need of nothing, and others are very poor." Sometimes we refer to Christians in the nominal Church as babes—and most of them probably are—but we cannot make a blanket statement about all of them. The point is that we have to be very careful when speaking on the subject of whom God favors.

These principles are very important to observe lest we get high-minded as individuals. Paul used Scripture to illustrate that as great as Elijah was, he was not aware of 7,000 others who had not yet bowed the knee to Baal, and it took character to remain loyal to Jehovah during Jezebel's reign. Certainly the 7,000 are not to be equated with Elijah, for he was *specialy* chosen as a leader and was more prominent, but the others were also chosen and believed as he did.

To Christian Jews who listened to Paul, his whole line of reasoning seemed to be against them. They got the gist that he was criticizing the Jews who were judging. First, he kept giving them a black mark. Then he switched and counterbalanced his reasoning by saying God had not cast off the Jews forever and He had a remnant. Later in this eleventh chapter, Paul showed that Gentiles replaced the Jews who were broken off. In the Abrahamic tree of promise, the Jewish branches that did not bear fruit were taken away, and Gentiles were grafted in. While Paul was deprecating the Jews lest they boast above themselves, he also said they were not entirely cast off. Gentiles, who were on the sidelines listening to his reasoning, were replacements of the Jews who were cast off the Abrahamic tree of promise. Paul was giving the lesson to both Jewish and Gentile Christians, but since he used so many Scriptures about Israel, he wanted the Jews to know that they had not been entirely cast off and that there would be a remnant.

Paul had quoted Isaiah, who spoke to Israel on behalf of God: "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom. 10:21). The same principle was stated in the Book of Jeremiah. The lesson was an encouragement to the Gentiles, and the Jews were being told, "The number is small, so do not be heady." The "remnant" of 144,000, a predetermined number, first consisted of Christian Jews, but since not enough Jews accepted Christ, the "election of grace" went to the Gentiles.

Rom. 11:6 And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

"And if by grace, then is it [election, the high calling, salvation] no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it [election] be of works, then is it [election] no more grace." What is the thought of the last clause, "Otherwise work is no more work"? Works are not meaningful in the calling of God because election is by grace. Nevertheless, a *living* faith produces works. Stated another way, if works are not produced, the faith is dead (James 2:17,18,20). The reasoning of James harmonizes with what Paul said.

Notice the use of present tense. Paul was speaking of the calling of God, the election of God. The setting here in Romans is the early development of the children of God, for the real election takes place later, when 144,000 have been proven faithful. At the end, those who are more-than-overcomers will inherit the *chief* grace, the prize of the high calling. Paul was speaking to Christians at the beginning of the Gospel Age, in the Ephesus period, the first stage of the gospel Church. This doctrine was new, and to be a Christian in Paul's day required one to make stark decisions about his life, his job, and his safety. When witnessing, he had to be discreet with his words. But Paul, sent out as an apostle with a special charge, was a leader, so he stated matters strongly. As others consecrated and grew and developed more zeal, they became more like Christ and Paul. Paul had been consecrated for a long time, probably even

prior to his becoming a Christian, but not with knowledge until Jesus appeared to him on the way to Damascus. Until then he was very dedicated to and concerned about the Law.

If we are saved by grace—by the gift of God—then we are not saved by works. A gift is gratis; it is not earned (like wages) by works. God deals with us by grace. After we consecrate, we work out our own salvation, but since works are always *imperfect* on this side of the veil, grace must accompany our works (Phil. 2:12). Initially, we come to God on faith, belief, and His grace in recognizing the arrangement through Christ. Based on justification and the robe of Christ's righteousness, God accepts us by *grace*, not works. If the two are mixed, both deteriorate.

Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel to learn. His reasoning is sometimes foreign to our way of thinking today, but we try to follow his reasoning.

Comment: On the subject of foreknowledge, predestination, and God's will, God said He would have mercy on whom He would have mercy. He raised up Pharaoh to show His great power, He predestinated a class to be conformed to the image of His Son, etc., so in the final analysis, the plan is God's creation. As the Potter, He has power over the clay, and everything will work out according to His plan, precisely as He laid it out before ever creating Adam. Thus His plan seems to be less than individual predestination but more than foreknowledge.

Reply: Whatever God does, He has a good reason. We do not have to know every little detail, for that is where faith and trust come in. First, natural faith sees the great God, and that realization is mind-boggling. He states, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8,9). When God uses human instruments to speak in the Scriptures, some things are purposely stated in hyperbolic fashion. He condescends to talk in our language so that we can understand, but His true language is so far above us that we have to say, "I know He has the best reason for what He is doing." For example, God was partial with regard to His Son, but when we see what Jesus did, we know God had a good reason for choosing him. When a strong angel proclaimed with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" no one was found until Jesus came (Rev. 5:2-5). When the holy angels saw Jesus' life and his sacrifice on the Cross, they would humbly say in their heart, "I question whether I could ever do that." One by one, each angel would admit Jesus' superiority. God also chose Paul, and when we study Paul's life, we ask, "Could we do the things he did and suffer what he suffered?" We would quail by comparison, for what he did was startling, consistent, and fervent.

Jesus and Paul were leaders, but God also has reasons with the lower level of the Little Flock as a whole. Of course God does not tell us all of His reasons. However, we are told that Paul and Jeremiah were chosen from the womb, and we can see that is true when we study their characters. Based on knowing that God had reasons for choosing Paul and Jeremiah, we trust He also had a good reason for choosing the other Ancient Worthies and members of the Little Flock. Pharaoh, a vessel of dishonor, was responsible for his own actions and destiny. Even though God chose Pharaoh to show His glory to all the nations by having plagues come upon this stubborn character, Pharaoh exercised his own free will. By faith, we extend this principle and realize that God chooses other individuals as well. God merely foresees what decisions and actions an individual will take and uses them. In fact, God even uses Satan, the chief enemy. In His own time and way, God can and will overrule Satan's efforts to destroy, belittle, retard, and reject. Meanwhile, He allows Satan to be a taskmaster to prove the mettle and character of the people he is subordinating. However, God made Lucifer perfect in the beginning, and Satan himself chose to rebel when his ego got inflated. We see only chief characters in Scripture, such as Jesus, Paul, Pharaoh, and Satan, but when God makes a broad statement about election by grace with regard to all He has called in the Gospel Age, we can say *by faith* that *He has a reason*,

of which we are not given the details.

Rom. 11:7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded

Rom. 11:8 (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

“The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded [or hardened—see King James margin and *Diaglott* interlinear] ... unto this day.” Israel is in much of the theme of this epistle, but Paul was writing to a mixed class. Therefore, the Gentiles were also drawing lessons from Paul’s reasoning, and they knew that election by grace included them.

Paul quoted Isaiah 29:10, “For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.” This prophecy applies to the ends of both ages (Jewish and Gospel). Paul characteristically quoted a text and assumed the Jews knew the Scriptures and what he was talking about. He frequently quoted the Old Testament, preceding the quote with “It is written” or the name of the individual who uttered it. In addition, he often used an Old Testament Scripture without specifically saying it was a quote.

Getting the *right slant* was most important. Paul often paraphrased a Scripture, even though the translators stated or implied that it was an exact quote. Because his purpose was especially to note the *prophetic standpoint* or a *principle*, there are sometimes differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament. For example, in quoting Jeremiah 31:31-33 in regard to the New Covenant in the Kingdom Age, Paul might be showing that since a change *will come*, the Christian should expect that some changes *have already taken place* in the Gospel Age. Paul wrote with emotion, power, and energy. His heart and soul were in the epistles, not just intellect!

If an individual Jew knew that God gave Israel the “spirit of slumber” as a whole, he would not feel hopeless or be discouraged—and he would look just for those with a hearing ear. The same principle applies to our day in regard to nominal Christendom and the true Church. However, we should not be smug and think we have all the truth. It is important to always remember that *God* gave us whatever truth we have. We should view Bro. Russell as a *messenger* only and not use his Volumes as a catechism.

Rom. 11:9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:

Rom. 11:10 Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always.

To show a principle, Paul quoted David, who prophesied of Jesus’ words and thoughts at the time of the Crucifixion. “Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake” (Psa. 69:22,23). Earlier Jesus said of the Jewish nation, “I would have taken you under my wings like a hen with her chicks,” but instead the nation crucified him (Matt. 23:37 paraphrase). Technically speaking, until the nation rejected him, there was opportunity for change, but once Jesus was nailed to the Cross, that act spoke volumes as to what the nation did.

“Let their [the Jews’] table be made a snare.” Spiritual pride *in works* under the Law kept the vast majority of Jews from accepting Christ. Forms, ceremonies, and works led to false

righteousness and self-satisfaction, whereas the Law should have been a *schoolmaster* to bring them to *Christ* (Gal. 3:24). Incidentally, a “table” back there was laid out on the ground.

“Let their eyes be darkened.” Natural Israel’s eyes have been darkened and their backs are bowed down so that they see only the natural promises, not the spiritual.

Q: What is the thought behind David’s writing, “Make their loins continually to shake”?

A: The Jews figuratively shook in vain in the trouble of AD 69-73 and during the Diaspora, when they were chased from nation to nation by fear and persecution.

Rom. 11:11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Rom. 11:12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

First, Paul said, “Have they [the Jews] stumbled that they should fall? God forbid.” Then he said, “But rather through their fall[,] salvation is come to the Gentiles.” In pointing out that God now deals with the Gentiles, Paul hoped the Jews would be provoked (in a *favorable* sense) to accept Jesus.

Next Paul said, “If the fall of them [the Jews] be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness?” As Paul was speaking this way, he knew, and had in mind, that at the end of the Gospel Age, all Israel (that is, the Holy Remnant) would be saved, and favor would return to natural Israel. With his first question, he meant, “Have they [the Jews] stumbled that they should fall *forever*?” Later Paul clarified these points, and the right-hearted Jews would hear the entire epistle before making a judgment.

As was common knowledge even among the Gentiles, Paul was saying that the nation of Israel had rejected Jesus. Since unconsecrated Gentiles tended to think that the Jews were out of grace forever, Paul needed to teach a lesson to Gentiles who consecrated and came into the truth. Therefore, he added, “If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?” In other words, if the Gentiles were *enriched* when Israel fell, then *more abundant* blessings would go to the world when Israel’s “fulness” comes in at the end of the present age.

We believe Paul knew, through multiple revelations, about the coming holocaust in AD 69-73. Not only did the Crucifixion of Jesus portend judgment, but John the Baptist had said that the nation would have a baptism of fire (Matt. 3:11,12). After that event occurred, the gospel Church would consist predominantly of Gentile Christians—in fact, almost exclusively.

Rom. 11:13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

Paul said, “I am the apostle of the Gentiles.” He had been reasoning with Christian Jews, but now he began to reason with Gentile Christians. The commission at the time Ananias anointed his eyes was that Paul would bear the Lord’s name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel (Acts 9:10-16). Therefore, Paul was commissioned to teach both Jews and Gentiles.

Q: How did Paul “magnify” his office?

A: In speaking to Gentiles, he enlarged his apostolic office beyond teaching primarily Jews.

Rom. 11:14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

These were strong truths to those who heard the epistle being read. Of course most were Christians, but some unconsecrated who attended the meetings were among the hearers. Later on in the epistle, Paul gave encouragement to and tried to persuade the latter group to become Christians, but at this time, he was mainly interested in straightening out the consecrated on the subject of the calling.

Paul said the Jews were *his* “flesh.” If they would truly *hear* the gospel message he preached, their aggressive stance with that enlightenment would be greatly blessed.

Rom. 11:15 For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

The Jews were once greatly blessed, but when they were cast off, a blessing went to the Gentiles. If this verse were read alone, out of context, we would have the nominal view that the Jews are permanently cast off from favor unless they accept Christ in the present age. In the Middle Ages, this view created enmity toward the Jews.

“What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” When the fullness of the Gentiles is come in at the end of the Gospel Age, all Israel will be saved (verses 25 and 26). At that time, Israel will be reconciled primarily along earthly lines. There may be a slight surprising influx of Jews with a spiritual hope at the end of this age, but generally speaking, it will be time for the establishment of the Kingdom on earth and the receiving back of Israel with the Holy Remnant, who will be delivered out of Jacob’s Trouble. “At midnight,” the Ancient Worthies will be resurrected (Psa. 119:62), and later, when the Kingdom is established and everything is in order, past generations of the dead will begin to return, with the last to die being first out of the tomb. In other words, Adam’s generation will be raised last.

Q: Will the “receiving” of the Jews be the ratification of the New Covenant?

A: The ratification of the New Covenant will begin then but not be consummated until the end of the Kingdom Age. As an illustration, the beginning of the ratification was emblemized when the blood of bulls (representing Christ) and goats (picturing the Little Flock) was sprinkled for purification, but since the sprinkling has to take place on the dead when they come out of the tomb, as well as on the living, ratification is a process. The purpose of the New Covenant is to bring together, or into harmony, two parties who are at enmity: God and the alienated people of mankind. When that *process* is consummated, the covenant will be fully in effect and will have accomplished its purpose of reconciling the world. This reasoning comes from studying all of Paul’s epistles, and of course the Bible was not completely collated until the third century, although most of it had been brought together by the year 100, the close of the first century.

Rom. 11:16 For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

Paul explained the olive tree in verses 16-21, beginning with the root. His reasoning was unusual with regard to the “firstfruit” and the “lump.” If the firstfruit is holy, so is the lump, or “afterfruit.” (Paul stated this principle in 1 Corinthians 15:23, “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”) And if the root is holy, so are the branches.

Comment: Verse 16 reads as follows in the Amplified: “Now if the first handful of dough offered as the first fruits [Abraham and the patriarchs] is consecrated (holy), so is the whole mass [the nation of Israel]; and if the root [the Abrahamic promise] is consecrated (holy), so are the branches.”

Reply: The term “firstfruit” ordinarily makes us think of just the fruit, the end product, but the seed and the bud are also involved. In ancient times, the term was sometimes used in a generalized way that can be misleading to us today. Similarly, a “meat offering” was a meal or cereal offering (Lev. 2:1). When the King James Bible was published in 1611, it was a sterling translation, but those living back there could more easily understand the vocabulary.

God called natural Israel the “lump.” Just as sin leavens dough, so the holiness of Abraham and the patriarchs purified the whole lump. According to nature, the opposite usually occurs. For instance, if a drop of black ink is put in a glass of water, the pure glass of water does not swallow up the color of the ink. Rather, the black ink begins to discolor the water. However, here the lump and the branches became holy.

An illustration was given in the Old Testament. If a person touched the garment of the high priest, he became holy. However, for the high priest to sanctify the people in the Court by letting them touch his robe when they were not in the proper heart attitude would be inappropriate. Therefore, a separation was made between the priest and the people. When a woman who had suffered with an issue of blood for 12 years touched the hem of Jesus’ garment, she followed the principle of the Law, which is contrary to nature, and she was healed (Matt. 9:20-22).

Paul used Jesus’ type of reasoning, wherein a tree is judged by its fruit. If the fruit is good, the tree is good (Matt. 7:17,18). Jesus is the *first* of the household of faith. If, therefore, the “firstfruit” is acceptable, the “afterfruit” (the Church class) will also be acceptable.

Rom. 11:17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

Rom. 11:18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

Why did Paul say, “If *some* of the branches be broken off”? Although the branches that were broken off were the majority of the nation of Israel, some of the Jews—that is, relatively few of them—remained on the olive tree by accepting Christ and thus running the race for the high calling. Paul was addressing the Gentile Christians and their attitude, telling them to be humble.

A broad-brush summary of this letter to the Romans is as follows. Paul first showed that all have sinned and are depraved, Jew and Gentile alike, for he was speaking to a *mixed* group. Then he began to address the Jews and subsequently turned to the Gentiles. Overall, he addressed the Jewish Christians with a disproportionate number of verses and Scriptures. Now, in this chapter, he switched back and forth between the two elements, for he was beginning to sum up what he had been trying to say in the previous ten chapters.

Abraham was brought in because the Abrahamic Covenant really embraces three covenants: (1) the Law of Moses (pictured by Hagar—Gal. 4:24), (2) the Sarah (Grace) Covenant, and (3) the New Covenant (represented by Keturah). Even though Jacob, the father of the nation of Israel, came much later, Abraham was of Eber, a Hebrew (Gen. 11:14-26). Therefore, the Abrahamic promise is the root of the olive tree.

Paul compared a cultivated olive tree (Israel) to a wild olive tree (the Gentiles). “If some of the [Jewish] branches be broken off, and thou [the Gentiles], being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them [the Jews], and with them partakest of the root [the Abrahamic promise] and fatness [the sap or oil] of the olive tree; Boast not against the [Jewish] branches.” Just as the sap of the olive tree becomes oil with growth over a *period of time*, so the fruitage of the Holy Spirit comes *slowly*.

Gentiles, the branches of the wild tree, were grafted into the cultivated tree to replace the broken-off Jewish branches. The cultivated olive tree more specifically represented *Israelites indeed*—and hence had the Abrahamic promise as the root. The Abrahamic promise has two kinds of seed: earthly (as the sand of the seashore) and heavenly (as the stars of heaven). The Gentiles were not to boast against the Jewish branches, for they did not bear the root, but the root bore them.

Comment: The Amplified has, “If you do boast *and* feel superior, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root [that supports] you.”

Rom. 11:19 **Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.**

Back there some of the Gentile Christians would have thought: “The Jewish branches were broken off so that *I* might be grafted in.” This was the old man (or old woman) speaking—“The Lord must have seen some innate quality *in me* that He liked.” It is true that being consecrated, we have truth others do not have, for unless a person is Spirit-begotten, he cannot perceive spiritual things, but if we speak from an *individual* standpoint, we can get high-minded. Also, since God calls only those with faith, we can say that we had inherent natural faith—that we were blessed with natural faith when we were born (Heb. 11:6). However, many others also have natural faith, including some who have not consecrated. Therefore, we should not be hasty in making rash statements or judgments.

Rom. 11:20 **Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear:**

The Jews were broken off because of unbelief, and now we, as Christians, have faith. But we must not boast or be high-minded lest we subsequently develop a condition where we begin to doubt and even become an unbeliever. Then we, too, would be broken off. We have this treasure in an earthen vessel, and sometimes the vessel spoils the treasure (2 Cor. 4:7).

Rom. 11:21 **For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.**

In summary, verses 16-21 are saying that if Gentile Christians are grafted in among Jewish Christians and partake of the Abrahamic promise, outnumbering the Jews, the Gentiles should not boast, for they can be broken off because of pride and the Jews grafted back in. In Christ *all are equal*, being children of Jehovah and brethren of Christ.

The word “also” reveals an unusual standard of God that makes Him what He is—just, reliable, and not wishy-washy. Human society shows favoritism. For example, the old nature makes excuses for a friend, but if the friend becomes an enemy of God and we continue to make excuses for him, we put ourselves in a very precarious situation. God taught the human race a lesson when He spared not His dear Son but allowed Jesus to go through a very severe testing period culminating on the Cross. One reason for the testings and sufferings was to show that Jesus was selected because he is the best one for the office. Otherwise, many would not see his sterling character and would just assume he was God’s favorite. *God is principled and has standards*. It is true that He does have favorites, but that favoritism is based on the *degree of*

obedience, not emotion. Jesus also had favorites. He loved all of his apostles, but he favored Peter, James, and John in some instances because they were more zealous than the others.

Rom. 11:22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

Paul anticipated Gentile thinking. A grafted-in branch is more precarious than a natural branch. Therefore, he said, “Gentile Christians, do not be high-minded. You were accepted through *faith*. Be in awe of your acceptance, and fear lest rejection come.” Paul used natural reasoning.

The gist of verses 20-22, which were addressed to the Gentile Christian, is as follows: “Fear ... [lest] thou also shalt be cut off [from the spiritual favor or seed].” Paul was trying to bring harmony between Jewish and Gentile Christians so that neither group would be high-minded. Hence he was discussing the gospel calling here, not Second Death. Israel could have been a nation of spiritual priests, but the nation was broken off from the spiritual blessing.

The tree illustrates three ages: Jewish, Gospel, and Millennial. The nation of Israel was broken off as respects the Gospel Age, but the Jews will be reinstated in the Millennial Age under the New Covenant. Thus the nation of Israel was on the tree during the Jewish Age, and it will be on the tree again in the future. To repeat: The Abrahamic Covenant embraces the Jewish, the Gospel, and the Millennial ages. The Abrahamic promise existed *before* the Jewish nation. Those Jews who accepted Christ were allowed to remain on the olive tree.

Verse 22 does not refer to emotions but to the value of what was lost: the high calling. We are to have *faith and humility*, for our standing is based on grace—*God’s grace*. Although this eleventh chapter can be used to teach the *principle* of being cut off as individuals into Second Death or the Great Company, it is really a simple lesson on *humility*.

The pronoun “his” is supplied. When included, the thought is, “Continue in *God’s* goodness.” When omitted, the thought is, “Continue in *goodness*”; that is, we are to maintain the integrity of our vow to the Lord. Both thoughts are helpful, although with the latter thought, we should remember Jesus’ words: “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God” (Matt. 19:17). Thus there are brakes in Scripture and modifying factors in Christian liberties.

Rom. 11:23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.

Rom. 11:24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

Jews can be re-engrafted during the Gospel Age, but they will definitely be re-engrafted in the future. Grafting in the same kind of branches is relatively easy, whereas grafting in foreign branches is more difficult and requires time to see if the graft is successful. The same principle applies to transplanting human organs from one person to another. Donors are sought with similar genetic factors so that the organs will not be rejected.

Certainly a holy remnant will be brought back into the fold to work with the Ancient Worthies when the Kingdom is established, for the Word of God will go forth from Jerusalem—a city with no thefts, adultery, crimes, or misdeeds at that time (Isa. 2:3). The Jews will be a holy nucleus, for they are to be the channel of the New Covenant, and Gentiles will have to become proselytes of the Jewish religion in order to get restitution blessings in a proper sense. In the

Kingdom Age, therefore, both the channel and the Gentiles will have to be grafted in. In that day, “there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 14:21).

Paul used the same principle in verse 24 but in a reverse fashion. He was saying, “If the Gentiles were cut out of the wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive tree, how much more easily could the natural branches be grafted back into their own cultivated olive tree?” Sometimes, as here, Paul turned things around with a purpose in mind. This approach was better, especially for the mixed Jewish and Gentile Christian element, for both groups would benefit. At times, Paul patted one group on the back and scolded the other, and then he reversed his reasoning and scolded the first group and patted the second group. At other times, he scolded both groups or encouraged both. This technique was very good because it avoided sectarianism, which is a form of favoritism that is improperly based.

Rom. 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

Paul was speaking to both groups here, Jewish and Gentile Christians: “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits.” “Blindness” has happened to almost the whole of natural Israel, but Paul minimized the situation by saying, “Blindness *in part* is happened to Israel.” Earlier he similarly minimized the situation by using the word “some”: “And if *some* of the [Jewish] branches be broken off....” This method deepened the principles underlying Paul’s reasoning and made the Jews more amenable to receiving his instruction.

Among those who call themselves Christians, some anti-Semitism exists. In fact, anti-Semitism has been so rampant down through the Gospel Age that some have likened the persecution of the natural Jew to that of the true Christian.

The statement “I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant” was characteristic of Paul (Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13). For that reason, he could faithfully declare at the end of his ministry, “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). Some feel it is being “Christian” to compromise truth, but that policy can be dangerous. Of course there are times when a tactful approach is in order but not always.

The “mystery” was that “blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” The blindness is temporary. Stated another way, *total* blindness happens to the majority of Israel *until the 144,000 are all selected*. All of the Little Flock could have been Jews if enough had accepted Christ and been faithful. However, since not enough Jews responded, the call went to the Gentiles. When the number (144,000) is complete, Israel’s blindness will be removed, and all of the Holy Remnant will be saved out of Jacob’s Trouble. At that time, the situation will be favorable to Israel.

The end of the general call occurred in 1881 and the end of the general harvest in 1914. Since that time, the call has been a gleaning period, and replacements of crown losers will continue until the number is complete.

The clause “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” does not refer to Gentile Times, which ended in 1914, for it is more inclusive. The clause is sometimes confused with Luke 21:24, “And they [the Jews] shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” It is interesting that in November 1917, shortly after Gentile Times ended, came the Balfour Declaration, which alleviated the Turkish control of Jerusalem because General Allenby

had conquered Palestine in a sudden fashion. He was outnumbered, but through a providential quirk of misunderstanding, he was assumed to be the “prophesied one” in human form. When the name “Allenby” is not heard properly, it sounds like “Allah.” Therefore, the Arabs, who are also looking for a messiah, thought he was Allah’s messenger.

Incidentally, in the past, some Jews have expected that when Messiah comes in the future, the Golden Gate will be ruptured and the dead will be raised. During the Diaspora, many of the Jews were more sober-minded in their thinking and less frivolous and high-minded than the Jews of today.

Romans 11:5, considered earlier, states, “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.” The thrust of Paul’s message to the Romans addressed the problem of harmony between Jewish and Gentile Christians, but he used careful wording to leave open the possibility that a remnant of Jews would accept Christ at the end of the Gospel Age and partake of the *spiritual* phase of the Kingdom; that is, a remnant of natural branches might be re-engrafted to the olive tree, having a hope of the high calling. At the First Advent, when Greeks began to inquire into the gospel message, Jesus realized it was time for his mission to end (John 12:20-23). If there is an antitype with a small group of Jews not only starting to inquire but also accepting present truth, we will *know* it is the *very end* of the Gospel Age. That event will be a sign to us that something is happening—that *very soon* the Church, the feet members, will have their change.

If (or when) that situation occurs, the “fulness of the Gentiles” will be a full number minus the small number of Jews who come in at the very end of the age. There would then have to be a very short time period and process in which not only is the removal of blindness possible for a *spiritual* hope, but subsequently blindness will be removed from the Holy Remnant, who have a *natural* hope. Thus the possibility is left open for some Jews to be favored with a spiritual hope, and a little later blindness will be removed with regard to the Holy Remnant when they see an overhead hologram of Messiah and the Crucifixion at the time of their deliverance from Jacob’s Trouble. This extraordinary singular event will suddenly and completely remove their blindness. They will be awakened in a startling fashion reminiscent of the Apostle Paul’s experience on the way to Damascus. He, too, was a natural Jew.

Certainly those Jews whose names are written in the book to be survivors at the end of the age will need preparation (Isa. 4:2-4; Dan. 12:1). The first part of their preparation is their turning to *God*, the supreme Deity. The second part is their turning to *Jesus Christ* as the Messiah. The removal of prejudice for Jesus will require a different type of revelation *preceded* by contrition. And a deeper type of contrition will occur when (or *after*) they recognize Jesus as their Messiah.

God’s dealings with Israel are a signpost, an indicator of where we are on the stream of time. The fig tree putting forth leaves in 1948 with the establishment of the nation of Israel alerts us to the nearness of the end of the age.

Rom. 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

“There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” What was Paul really saying here? Isaiah 59:20,21 reads, “And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.”

“The Deliverer” that shall come out of Zion is *The Christ*, Head and body members, the “saviours” (plural), who “shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD’S” (Obadiah 21). The quote from the fifty-ninth chapter of Isaiah shows that the Deliverer will literally come out of Israel in the sense that The Christ will use Israel as the capital of the world and set up the Kingdom from there.

Comment: David believed in a Kingdom on earth under the reign of Messiah. In Psalm 14:7, he wrote, “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.”

Comment: Paul was saying not only that the Holy Remnant will be saved when the Church is complete but that the event *cannot* happen until the Deliverer, Head and body, is complete.

Rom. 11:27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

Paul was referring to Jeremiah 31:31-33, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.” The New Covenant will have an initial beginning, but to “write” the law of God in the heart is a process that takes a little time.

Comment: In that same chapter, Jeremiah 31:37 reads, “Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.”

Reply: We would call that statement a challenge by God to man. Of course men theorize on the measurements of the heavens and the foundations of the earth, but they do not know them. When scientists today talk about the height of heaven, the astronomer’s yardstick is the speed of light, which is about 186,400 miles per second. However, the measurements include only the most distant stars that astronomers can see, and there are more stars beyond that point. And beyond the stars themselves is the real heaven, God’s heaven. God dwells in the “heaven of heavens” (Deut. 10:14; 1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron. 2:6; 6:18; Neh. 9:6).

Rom. 11:28 As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.

“As concerning the gospel, they [the Jews] are enemies for your [the Gentiles’] sakes: but as touching the election, they [the Jews] are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” In other words, as concerning the *spiritual* gospel, the Jews were cast off for the sake of the Gentiles, but as touching *earthly* election, the Jews are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. This statement is another humbling factor. For one’s own good, a proud person needs to be constantly clubbed over the head, figuratively speaking. Paul said he himself would be a castaway if he could open the eyes of his fellow Israelites (Rom. 9:3). He revealed his innermost being by saying that his criticisms were not given with a bad feeling toward the Jews. Rather, he was trying his uttermost to bring about peace in any dispute or schism in the Church, particularly in the ecclesia in Rome in this case. Not a physical separation, the schism was doubts and conflicts of thinking between Jews and Gentiles. Paul reasoned that the conflicts should be eliminated, for in the body of Christ, there is neither male nor female, bond nor free, Jew nor Gentile (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28). If God calls an individual and the individual consecrates, he is in the family as much as the most mature Christian. How long one stays in the body and to what degree he matures is another

matter, but all consecrated individuals start out in the spiritual family.

Rom. 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

The “gifts and calling” of God will not be changed. The meaning of the word “repentance” in present-day English is much more limited than in the past. God will not change His mind with regard to the gifts and calling. The same principle is shown in the statement “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8). That is also true of God, with whom there is a constancy of reliability. If one goes out of the truth, it is his own doing and not because of God or Jesus. Other laws come into effect that change character, like the searing of a conscience. Therefore, when one goes out of the truth, it seems that just as there are laws in the natural world of physics, so in the spiritual world of character, very real laws take place without special thought. Similarly in principle, a mountain erodes because of other elements.

Rom. 11:30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

Rom. 11:31 Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

“For as ye [Gentiles] in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their [the Jews’] unbelief: Even so have these [the Jews] also now not believed, that through your [the Gentiles’] mercy they [the Jews] also may obtain mercy.” Paul was talking to the Gentiles, and others who were listening benefited. The mercy obtained by the Gentiles was the opportunity for an extraordinary salvation, but how will they show mercy to the Jew? The “saviours,” the glorified Church, will come from Mount Zion. In addition to being instructed to save the Holy Remnant, the Little Flock will be filled with compassion for the situation that exists at that time because they will have gone through a process of indoctrination. Paul said that the dead in Christ were raised first, and the majority of the Christian Church was raised in 1878. Faithful individuals since that time, and up until the final collective rapture of the feet members, are gathered to Jesus and the risen saints in earth’s atmosphere, where orientation has been going on, with accurate information, in preparation for the climax at the very end of the age. Moreover, details of Scripture continue to clarify for those who are still in the flesh.

Rom. 11:32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

God concluded all Jews in unbelief so that He might have mercy on them. Paul showed the principle of mercy. God humbles both Jews and Gentiles—Jews through the loss of the chief blessing and Gentiles by having to become Israelitish in the Kingdom. All should be humble before God, for all are benefactors of His goodness and mercy. He has compassion—and so should we!

Rom. 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Paul became poetic in verses 33-36. What a beautiful personal testimony and expression of thanksgiving in praising God for His wisdom! Verse 33 is no exaggeration. In fact, this statement is low-key, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so God’s wisdom and knowledge are deeper than man can know. His judgments and ways are “past finding out!”

However, Paul was not saying that we should not try to understand and search out God’s judgments and the reasons He does certain things. As long as the heart attitude is proper, we believe that such a search is proportionately rewarded if the time is due for the understanding.

In other words, no matter how holy or zealous a Christian is, dispensational truth is locked until the due time comes for its revelation. Then, if one is in the proper heart condition, it stands to reason that the zealous Christian will be rewarded.

Rom. 11:34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

Paul used a similar expression in 1 Corinthians but gave it a different twist. “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:15,16). Even though man makes judgments, he cannot read the heart. Therefore, another party might misjudge one who is truly the Lord’s. However, one who is spiritual does discern or recognize “all things” to a certain extent, for Jesus said, “Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:10). Those who ask questions and desire to know are given information—of course they do not know everything, but they are rewarded.

“Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?” We can pray and ask if certain things are permissible, but we can neither fathom the mind of God to a great depth nor counsel Him. Paul’s adding, “But we have the mind of Christ,” suggests that we do know something. “We have the truth” is a cliché, but we know the truth *only in part*. By having the “mind of Christ,” we know some of God’s thinking, that is, to a certain extent.

Rom. 11:35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

God had no beginning and is the Creator, so “who hath first given to him”? No one!

Rom. 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

For *of, through, and to GOD* (not Jesus) are all things. To God “be [the highest] glory for ever. Amen.” What an exalted statement! Truly Paul was the chief apostle. He had common-sense logic, God-given wisdom, love like that of the Apostle John, and the fire and zeal of Peter.

Summary of Romans Chapter 11

In this chapter, Paul directed attention primarily to the Gentiles. Before that, he spoke mostly to the Jewish portion of the class and discussed the prejudices they had to override in order to live together in harmony with the Gentile converts to Christ. After speaking to the Jewish element, and sometimes rather strongly, Paul now turned to the Gentiles and said they, too, should not be high-minded. If some of the natural branches of the olive tree had been broken off in order that wild branches could be grafted in, then the wild branches could also be broken off and the natural branches grafted back into the stock of the olive tree. Paul added that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles is brought in, and then “all Israel shall be saved” (Rom. 11:26).

The olive tree—its root system and trunk primarily—represents the Abrahamic Covenant, but why was an *olive tree* used for the illustration? In the vision of Zechariah 4:2,3, two olive trees stood on the right and left sides of a golden seven-branched candlestick with a bowl above it. Oil from the two olive trees flowed through two pipes to the bowl and then through seven pipes to the candlestick. The two olive trees were described as “the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth,” that is, they represent the Old and New Testaments (Zech. 4:11-14). The olive tree serves several functions. Not only are olives a food, but the oil has medicinal value as an unguent and provides light, or illumination, in a lamp. Accordingly, the Abrahamic Covenant will provide light (truth) and fruitage.

When Noah sent out a dove from the Ark, it came back with an olive branch in its mouth (Gen. 8:11). The dove, a gentle bird, was a symbol of peace, and the olive branch gave evidence of life, hope, and encouragement in connection with the Flood being assuaged. The fruitage and blessing attendant with the olive tree picture the Abrahamic Covenant, which is a covenant of promise, hope, and life to come.

Comment: The Abrahamic Covenant applies to all three ages—Jewish, Gospel, and Millennial. It has brought light to the nation of Israel and to Christians, and it will bring light to the world in the Kingdom.

The Abrahamic Covenant has two seeds: (1) a *natural* seed that is likened to the sand of the seashore, and (2) a *spiritual* seed that is compared to the stars of heaven. Of course the application in Romans 11 to the calling of the Gospel Age pertains only to the spiritual seed. However, there were two promises to the Jew: a natural promise and a spiritual promise. In other words, had the Jews been faithful, God would have made of them “a kingdom of priests” (Exod. 19:6). Stated another way, if the Jewish nation had accepted Christ, they would have inherited not only the natural promise but also the spiritual promise. Because only a remnant, a small number of Jews, accepted Jesus as Messiah, God sent out the call to Gentiles to fill up the predestined number of 144,000. Thus He grafted Gentile branches into the natural olive tree to fill up the number. When the fullness of the Gentiles is brought in—that is, *after* the Church is complete and *in glory*—“all Israel” (the Holy Remnant) will be saved. The expression “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” means after a sufficient number of Gentiles have made their calling and election sure to complete the 144,000. At that point, the purpose of the Gospel Age will have been accomplished. The next primary event will be the salvation of the world of mankind with the Jewish seed and with Jerusalem as the capital. Of course the Great Company will be completed in the interim period, but Paul was talking on the issue of Jews and Gentiles.

When we reason on Paul’s statement that the Jewish branches were broken off and the Gentile branches grafted in, what were they grafted into? The Gentile branches were grafted into the *heavenly seed*, or Sarah feature, of the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham had three wives—Hagar, Sarah, and Keturah—who represent three covenants. From one standpoint, the Abrahamic Covenant is all-embracing, but the Sarah and Keturah portions are prophetic. The point is this: when Paul said, “And so all Israel shall be saved,” he was referring to the Millennial Age application. Nevertheless, although the Jewish branches were broken off the olive tree and the wild Gentile branches were grafted into the spiritual seed, Paul admonished the Gentiles not to be high-minded because that which was once broken off could come back in. His choice of words leaves the door ajar for the possibility that at the end of the age, some Jews will come into the Gospel arrangement with the hope of the high calling. Paul was not pursuing that argument because he jumped over the completion of the Great Company and into the next age with the statement “And so all Israel shall be saved.” However, if we stop before that last statement and follow Paul’s preceding argument—that the Jewish branches were broken off so Gentiles could come into the *spiritual seed* class but that the Gentiles should not be high-minded because the Jewish branches could be grafted in again—it *leaves open the possibility* of some Jews even coming into the spiritual segment at the end of the age. However, Paul’s emphasis on all Israel’s coming back pertained to the *natural* seed. (See again Romans 11:20-26.) To clarify a point: the Jewish branches that were broken off were not just the natural part of the Abrahamic Covenant, for the breaking off had to do with the Jews who did not accept Christ and thus lost out on the opportunity for the high calling.

Rom. 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

This verse was addressed primarily to the consecrated, as stated in Romans 1:7, but the wording was couched in a form that, in a secondary sense, was also instructive for, and of value to, the unconsecrated who were attending the meeting. Romans 6:3, which reads, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” shows that Paul was considering both the consecrated and the unconsecrated—that is, a *mixed* group—for not all had been baptized into Christ. Here in verse 1, Paul took up the same thought, primarily focusing on the saints but also saying that the unconsecrated would have to present their bodies “a living sacrifice” if they wanted to partake of the promises.

Q: Why would Paul address the unconsecrated as “brethren”?

A: They were *tentatively* included. Not only the Pastor but others have used the term “brethren” for those who are newly interested in the truth as a means of encouraging them in the benefits of brotherhood. However, we have seen that such use of the term often has an opposite effect if it is made a permanent form of address. Various individuals have attended meetings off and on—some rarely, some frequently—who are not consecrated but are always addressed as “Bro. So-and-so,” and that practice is not scriptural.

Comment: The difference here is that Paul was using a “group” address. He was not singling out an unconsecrated individual and calling him “brother” but, rather, was addressing a mixed group of consecrated and unconsecrated.

Reply: Yes, that is an important point. In regard to the unconsecrated, the term “brother” can be applied *generally* but not *repetitively*. In other words, it can be used either in a public fashion where all accept Jesus as Savior or in a prospective sense, especially if newcomers have a religious background. However, we should draw a line between the consecrated and the unconsecrated. That address can be used for a *collective* group or for an unconsecrated individual under a *rare* circumstance (Acts 2:29,37; 3:17).

Q: Since the consecrated are *dead* to the world in Christ Jesus, why did Paul use the expression “a *living* sacrifice”?

A: The picture is complex. Although in the type, the animal offered on the altar was indeed dead, it was considered a *reckoned* death, not an actual death. Therefore, the animal pictured the Christian who *dies daily* and thus is a *living* sacrifice. The sacrifice of the Christian is reckoned as perfect because it is justified by the merit of Christ, and thus it is pleasing to God. The dead animal in the type represents the “earthen vessel” of the Christian, who has “this treasure,” the new mind, the new creature, in his body of flesh (2 Cor. 4:7).

As originally commanded, an animal that was presented for sacrifice was to have no blemish; that is, as far as could be discerned, a perfect, healthy animal was to be brought for sacrifice. Then it was slain and skinned and either burnt whole on the altar (except for certain inner parts, the hide, and the dung) or partially put on the altar depending on the type of sacrifice. Even after the animal had been on the altar for, say, ten minutes and was partly consumed, it was still reckoned perfect as the consuming process continued. Thus is pictured the dual nature of a Christian’s sacrifice. The outward body perishes, but instead of perishing just from being under the Adamic curse, there is an additive to this expense of energy that is pleasing to God; namely, one lays down his life in sacrifice to God in appreciation of (1) the mercies extended in revealing the truth and (2) his acceptance through obedience. Hence it is a *live* sacrifice—a *living daily* sacrifice—even though one is reckoned dead in Christ and the sacrifice is being consumed.

Another interesting point. Paul said, “I beseech you therefore, brethren [*plural*] . . . that ye present your bodies [*plural*] a [*singular*] living sacrifice.” The singular was used because we are

nothing of ourselves, and each of us is only a *member* of *one body*. Even the body would not be much except that (1) it is attached to the Head and (2) the previous sacrifice, representing Christ, makes the body acceptable. This *one* sacrifice is the sacrifice of The Christ—from one perspective, it is the Head and body members, and from another perspective, it is the bullock and the Lord's goat (Lev. 16:6-9).

This sacrifice is a *communal* service, which is unifying in its concept. Not only is the sacrifice our “reasonable service” and pleasing to God, but also it is “holy” and “acceptable” unto Him. The thought that presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice is a *reasonable* service is a little astounding at first, but God is not unreasonable in what He is asking. Paul was not referring to giving up things like smoking and drinking, for what God wants is each of us as an *individual*. Many think of what they had to give up to become a Christian, but Paul counted what he gave up as dung that he might “win Christ” (Phil. 3:8). Some say, “If I had not consecrated, I could have had an important position or trained for a profession,” but Paul gladly counted all his learning, training, and abilities as a deficit, a loss, so that he could preach Christ. Those who waver along these lines throughout their life do not appreciate the fact that consecration is a *privilege*. We all start out as babies with duty love, but as time goes on, we should see that the opportunity to run for the prize of the divine nature is extraordinary. What we give up is *nothing* compared to the *reward* for being faithful. Therefore, Paul was talking low-key when he called consecration our “reasonable service.” Not only is it reasonable, but not seeing it as a privilege shows our lack of appreciation.

Q: Did the coals in the Brazen Altar in the Court burn at all times?

A: Yes, the fire was not allowed to go out. Levites watched to make sure, for keeping the coals burning was a mandatory law. When the Israelites had to move to another location, the Levites put the coals in a fire pan to keep them active. If a fire pan is sealed properly, the coals last a long time. Similarly, during all of the Olympic Games, a bowl of fluid is kept burning. It is ignited at the start and extinguished when the games end. For the Christian, the “fire” is our zeal in being faithful unto death. When death comes to an *individual Christian*, the fire in him ceases. Of course the fire in the Church as a whole is *communal*.

Comment: The ever-burning coals in the Brazen Altar, as well as the light in the Holy never going out, shows a *living* sacrifice.

Reply: The new creature is to grow daily as the old creature perishes. With both occurring at the same time, the fire in the Brazen Altar represents zeal, and the flesh of the animal pictures the justified old creature being consumed. The new creature as part of the body of Christ is pictured by the priest. We are seated as new creatures, as underpriests, in the Holy (Eph. 1:3; 2:6). Thus the animal represents the old creature, the underpriest represents the new creature, and the coals of fire picture the “zeal of thine [God's] house,” which is supposed to consume us (Psa. 69:9; John 2:17).

It is interesting too that the light continues to burn, and the wick gets trimmed to make the flame a little brighter. The wick in the lamp represents the old nature, the oil pictures the Holy Spirit, and the light is the light of truth. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Both the energy of the coals and the burning of the light represent the zeal of the new creature.

Although not the primary intent, the Church's share in the *one* sin offering is also taught by the distinction, overruled by the Holy Spirit, between presenting “your bodies [plural]” and “a living sacrifice [singular].” *Many* grains (or members) are in the *one* loaf.

A *living sacrifice* is continuous. The Lord's goat, which is justified by the blood of the bullock, represents the justified humanity of the Church when it is put on the altar. The word "live" (or "living") has a lot of meaning. A sacrifice is *live* from two standpoints: (1) it should be kept *active*, and (2) it is a *justified* (and hence acceptable) sacrifice. Christ opened up a "new and *living way*" (Heb. 10:20).

We consecrate "by the mercies of God," presenting our bodies a living sacrifice. "For by grace [the tender mercies of God] are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). By repenting and consecrating, one is "saved" from Adamic condemnation. The person is saved from Adamic sin not because of works but because of a gift, which is based on God's calling. *Grace and faith*, not works, are emphasized in Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Rom. 12:2 **And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**

"Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Two words are contrasted: "conformed" and "transformed." What is the difference between them?

Comment: To be transformed is to be completely changed, to be made new, as pictured by the butterfly, which starts as a worm.

Reply: Yes. Being transformed is not merely a change in direction from the world but an actual *change of nature*. The worm, the old nature, goes through the cocoon state and emerges as a butterfly, soaring in another realm as a new creature. Not only do we buck the world, but God is dealing with us as a new creature—not a reformation of the old nature but a *transformation*.

We are transformed by the "renewing" of our mind; that is, our mind is to be made entirely new. We are to keep this renewing process going *daily*. When we consecrate, we get a new mind, and this new mind must be renewed and renewed day after day. At consecration, the old mind dies; it is put to death, and we receive a new mind with heavenly hopes, aims, and ambitions. The two natures are separate and distinct. The new mind (or creature) is a separate, new being, which is merely housed in the old body, awaiting the adoption beyond the veil when we get a new spiritual body to go with our new mind.

Our Lord also had two separate natures. "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. 24:28). The saints gather around the *dead humanity* of Christ (the carcass). The *man Jesus* died.

Comment: The Christian is not to be conformed to the world, for "all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16 paraphrase).

Reply: We are not to indulge in former passions, hopes, ideals, and ambitions—what we pursued prior to consecration.

Comment: The word translated "world" is the Greek *aion*, meaning "age."

Reply: We are not to be conformed to the customs, cosmetics, and outward adornments of the world, which are so superficial. When the unconsecrated die, they give up all these things anyway, whereas the Christian sacrifices in the present life for something far, far, exceedingly greater. Once we get that perspective—if we think on it enough—the things of this world lose their allurements and become trash.

The “renewing” of the mind is not just an intellectual understanding of truth but a refocusing so that all things become new. The purpose of renewing our mind is to “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” The chief thing that God desires from us is our *heart*. “My son, give me thine heart” (Prov. 23:26). He wants *obedience*, for to obey is better than all the zeal and sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22). God wants our sanctification. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). In the type, what pictured the high priest’s sanctification? A gold plate, fastened with a blue lace to his miter, read “HOLINESS TO THE LORD,” meaning “Wholly to Jehovah” (Exod. 28:36).

To “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God,” we must keep renewing our mind and growing as a new creature in the present life. If faithful in this pursuit all our life, we will become God’s son beyond the veil and hear the commendation “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21). If we respond properly to all of God’s providences and are faithful to the end of our course, we will end up in the Little Flock.

Comment: The Apostle Peter said, “Greatly rejoice ... That the trial [genuineness or *proof*] of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:6,7). The *proof* of our faith is more precious than gold.

Reply: Yes, we want to prove “what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God,” and *obedience* brings the proof. First, we *study* to know God and His will, and then, as we sincerely and honestly try to *do* His will, our knowledge becomes *experimental*, which is *wisdom*.

The usual thought is that the *suffering* in a trial is valuable. Although that is true, the *higher* thought is that the *proof* of our faith should be found acceptable, that the *genuineness* of our faith will be proved acceptable at the appearance of Jesus. To be part of the Little Flock would prove that our faith was genuine.

Rom. 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

In what sense should a man not “think of himself more highly than he ought to think”? Paul emphasized grace elsewhere in this epistle, but here he was emphasizing *faith*. We are each to “think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” Paul was talking about faith, as opposed to works and wages under the Law. We can receive life through the new and living way of faith and grace.

Q: Verse 3 says that God deals “to every man the measure of faith,” but what kind of faith?

A: Paul was discussing natural faith, which is a gift of God that one is born with (Heb. 11:6). Verse 6 mentions gifts “according to the proportion of *faith*,” showing that faith can be increased. Spiritual faith, a fruit of the Holy Spirit, is different from natural faith.

When the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land but got the report of the spies about the stature of the inhabitants and the impregnable fortifications of the cities, they felt they were not able to enter. The first problem was thinking they could enter in their own strength, whereas God says, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in *weakness* [not strength]” (2 Cor. 12:9). The lesson of strength in weakness is impressive. How wonderful that as one progresses, the glory or credit belongs to God, for His Spirit, or power, operates in us both to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13)! Trying to succeed by measuring ourselves and subconsciously thinking of our own capability is the wrong slant.

God's Spirit can make us overcome in ways we never thought possible.

Paul was saying that all brethren are to soberly assess, according to *faith*, their own natural abilities, and they are to utilize those abilities as God gives opportunity. However, brethren should guard against becoming so absorbed in one type of service that they disparage the different functions of others. For example, for evangelists to pressure others exclusively into just their type of service would be wrong.

Verses 1-3 are like a summation or climax of the Epistle to the Romans thus far. Paul had been using a more or less philosophical approach to the behavior of Jews and Gentiles in the Church. Then, starting with verse 4, he made isolated pithy comments, somewhat like the format of the Book of Proverbs, as an addendum.

Rom. 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

Many members are in the one body, but not all have the same function or office. Sometimes one who consecrates happens to be in a position that can be useful right away in God's service. Some members of the body may perform what is considered a lowly and insignificant type of service, yet it is very important. An example would be visiting the sick. One should try to do the type of service he is best fitted for but, at the same time, be careful he does not become wholly absorbed in it where *works*, rather than the *zeal* of the Lord's house, consume him.

The thought is that we are appointed in the body. In other words, as time goes on, one who is faithful to God finds himself in a niche, in a position or office. The office may be a lonely one, such as the Reformers had or the prophets of old, who did a unique service for which they were called. For example, Amos was a herdsman, a farmer, but God said to him in effect, "Come, for I have something for you to do." Amos disclaimed his natural talent, but God called him into an office to perform a certain work. Some brethren fervently pray for a leading as to how to use their talent(s) in the Lord's service.

Comment: The *Diaglott* interlinear says that not all have the same "operation." The word "operation" seems more appropriate for both brothers and sisters in Christ, since service is more than an elected office of deacon or elder. Prayer, witnessing, visiting the sick, and many other functions are appropriate according to one's talent(s).

Reply: Yes, "function" and "operation" are both good terms to use. The word "office" was all right in the 1611 English of the King James Bible.

Comment: Paul said, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor. 12:18).

Reply: However, that text should not be limited to something natural and visual. For instance, through personal ambition, drive, and energy, some get in a position they are ill-equipped to handle. Consider how God tenderized Moses for 40 years in Sinai before he was fully equipped for office. David spent 15 years fleeing from Saul, going from cave to cave and from place to place, before becoming king. Thus various experiences are often needed to prepare an individual before the Lord puts him in a particular office or function. After the preparation period, the Lord's providence can favor a person with a unique position of service or operation by opening a door of opportunity. For a brother or sister to force open a door of opportunity prematurely could work to the individual's spiritual detriment.

Rom. 12:5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of

another.

There is also a *need* for one another, a *dependency*. We are members of one another; that is, we should have an interest in the offices and functions of others. And we should not feel envy toward or criticize those who do other types of work for the Lord. We are members in the *one* body, as well as members *of each other*.

Paul was always striving for unity of the body without compromising or sacrificing principle. A proper unity is desired.

Comment: Many brethren have more than one talent, so they fit into a number of operations.

Reply: For example, in addition to translating the Scriptures at great cost and disappointment, where his efforts seemed to fail time and time again, Tyndale was remembered after his death for every Sunday desisting from the work that absorbed his life and doing a pastoral type of service, visiting the sick and preaching as opportunity afforded. Thus he tried to be effective in ministering to others as well as in translating the Scriptures.

Comment: Verse 5 carries forward the thought of the operation that *each* member of the body has. We should not be self-centered with our own activity or function but should be interested in and encourage the upbuilding of others.

Rom. 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.” Paul likened both grace and faith to being a gift and then described that grace as prophesying, ministering, teaching, exhorting, giving aid to brethren, ruling, and showing mercy (verses 6-8). In other words, gifts differ according to grace, and *grace* is common to all gifts.

In regard to prophesying, Paul said, “Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.” The gifts of grace and faith complement each other. Prophesying is usually thought of as being a public expounder, but it can also be a seer or pertain to the study of future events. In either case, it should be *according to the measure of faith*. This thought is *sobering*, for our tendency as humans is to verbally express our faith in stronger terms than it actually exists. Paul said, “Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God” (Rom. 14:22). For example, we should not repetitively express to others our faith in future events, for repetition becomes negative, and our actions may not be in harmony with our words. Self-analysis is difficult to do, for it is hard to see ourselves as others see us. The point is that a brother should prophesy, or teach, in a quiet way by not emphasizing more than he has in himself. Thus it is better not to speak too affirmatively on a matter, for right away we will be tried in that area. If a Christian says emphatically, “I would *never* do such and such,” he will be tested on that point. “Never say never” is a meaningful cliché.

Comment: By nature, some are endowed with more talents, but they should not think of themselves as being higher than others.

Reply: High-mindedness is usually associated with pride, which is pragmatically illustrated by overevaluating our talents or abilities. Therefore, we should quietly assess our talents and not waste time by trying to develop a talent we do not possess, especially when we have other abilities to use in the Lord’s service. And the few brethren who have supertalents have to curb themselves lest they become too forward in forcing doors of opportunity to open.

Comment: The more talents one has, the greater the responsibility to use them as the Lord provides opportunities.

Q: How do we know what our talents are?

A: Pray about the matter, keeping in mind that the answer may not come for a long time. In praying by themselves, some brethren even shout for help along that line. Prayer positions and supplications can have some meaning to God when they are done in sincerity and truth. Consider how Jesus agonized in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Of course much has to do with the value of an experience. Some exaggerate this principle by using self-flagellation, thinking their prayers will be answered by cutting themselves. However, the old man in each of us is exceedingly deceitful, so we have to search our motives. Prayer should come from the depth of the heart. Honesty, humility, hunger, and holiness are the necessary ingredients.

In the Old Testament, the prophets spoke mechanically, but their prophecies were significant. In the New Testament, the seven messengers were each given a stewardship through God's providence. As stated earlier, a "prophet" can be a *public* expounder of truth, and "prophecy" is the gift of knowing future events. Prophecy awakens *public* interest in a subject when the Lord opens the door. For instance, prophecy may be presented in a journal such as *Zion's Watch Tower*. Prophecy is public speaking on a higher level than, say, evangelizing.

Rom. 12:7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching;

"Ministering" is "serving," a broad term that includes many kinds of service in helping others. One who has that gift should use it. A sister in years past had the gift of public witnessing. For example, she would walk into a subway car, sit down on a vacant seat, and witness so naturally and matter-of-factly to the party sitting next to her that he listened and did not feel he was being witnessed to. In the Pastor's day, another sister had a wonderful talent for witnessing to bankers, financiers, and men of high office and was very influential in producing results.

Paul was saying, "Whatever your talent is—prophesying, ministering, or something else—use it." We should pray for (1) zeal, (2) ability, and (3) opportunity to witness and serve. It is good to be specific in prayer if we are desirous of certain things and not to beat the air (1 Cor. 9:26).

Rom. 12:8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

"Giving" is to be done with liberality and simplicity, that is, not grudgingly or sparingly but with reasonableness. And giving should be done discreetly, quietly, and secretly, not letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing (Matt. 6:2,3). God does not expect from us what we do not have, but the little we do have is to be given with grace, appreciation, and recognition of the opportunity as a privilege.

Comment: We are reminded of the widow's two mites (Mark 12:42-44).

Reply: Yes. If Jesus observed the widow putting in her two mites, then we know the Heavenly Father makes similar observations.

"Ruling" is having a position of leadership or authority. For the last category, the *Diaglott* says that acts of mercy are to be done "with cheerfulness." Thus there are all kinds of service.

Rom. 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

“Let love be genuine [without pretense or hypocrisy]” (see RSV). What does the last part of verse 9 remind us of—“Abhor [hate] that which is evil; cleave to that which is good”?

Comment: God said to Jesus, “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Heb. 1:9; Psa. 45:7).

Reply: Yes. We are to *cultivate a hatred for* and to *discern* evil deeds. Of course we should leave a door open for an individual to repent and change, but we should always hate the evil itself. In other words, we should not socialize with a consecrated individual who has committed grievous sin but should be ready to forgive him and welcome him back *if he repents*.

Rom. 12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Comment: We are in a spiritual family, and within that family, we are to be kindly affectioned with brotherly love for one another. Jesus gave the commandment to love one another (John 13:34).

Comment: “In honor preferring one another” means to recognize the good points in each of the brethren. We are to look for the quality in each that is superior to us. Paul said elsewhere, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3).

Reply: Verse 10 is the general rule. Under normal circumstances, we should “be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love,” but of course there are exceptions. To be kindly affectioned with a consecrated individual who has committed grievous sin and violated a serious principle would be to encourage him in the wrong.

Also, we are to prefer one another in certain matters where principle is not involved. However, we should not exaggerate this instruction beyond what Paul intended. In other words, we should try to select the best brother for a given situation and not bypass one who is especially qualified. For example, if an ecclesia is planning a convention symposium on the subject of the Tabernacle, the class members should vote for the most qualified speakers on that topic. If we consider the truth movement as a cause, it is common sense to choose as speakers those who are most qualified in each area.

Along another line, “in honor preferring one another” means that in considering each other, if we look at any consecrated brother or sister, we will find some quality that is superior whereby we can think and speak well of the individual. On an appropriate occasion, it would not be harmful to mention the quality in order to encourage the individual.

Comment: Where the Heavenly Father has bestowed a certain talent, gift, or ability on an individual, we should prefer that person for a position that will utilize and exercise that special quality. For example, Barnabas was helpful as a comforter in the early Church (Acts 4:36).

Comment: We are to prefer the brotherhood over our worldly family.

Reply: That is a different slant, and it is true.

Rom. 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

“Not slothful in [the King’s] business; fervent in spirit.” We should watch diligently for opportunities to serve the Lord. The secondary application pertains to secular business.

This counsel is good because the behavior of many people in public, in business, and in the Church can be different, whereas the Christian should have a constant, uniform moral standard. Not only are we not to be slothful in serving the Lord, but in secular employment, we are to render proper service to the employer. As Christians, we have a responsibility to be a good example in the workplace. A Christian is usually a target, with coworkers being quick to point out any mistakes that are made. They may not call attention to good behavior, but we can be sure they observe it. In business, one should not be slow to perform, take extra coffee breaks, ignore the interests of the business, etc. Today the prevailing attitude is often what one can get away with without being fired, and with union protection, it is almost impossible to fire a worker. The situation breeds slothfulness and lackadaisical behavior.

Consider what was said about Daniel when the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against him. Finding no fault, they concluded, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the *law of his God*” (Dan. 6:5). In his business in the government, his behavior must have been exemplary and impeccable, for the officials knew they could not fault him on any grounds other than the worship of his different God.

The term “fervent in spirit” reminds us of Ecclesiastes 9:10, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” We serve the Lord not only in the ecclesia arrangement but also as an ambassador in the world. Our behavior in the world is expected to be a Christian witness.

Rom. 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

We are to rejoice in the hope of the high calling and to patiently endure tribulation. When the two thoughts are coupled together, those who are properly exercised by an experience manifest cheerful endurance. Patient (long-suffering) endurance and cheerful endurance are equally important, for in certain areas, cheerful endurance is impossible. For example, consider Jesus while he was on the Cross.

“Continuing instant in prayer.” At all times, we are to have the spirit and attitude of prayer. We do not literally pray every moment, but we are to be ready to seek prayer whenever we have a need—and to do so instantly, as soon as possible. Praying and looking to the Lord for guidance in time of need should be our habit.

Rom. 12:13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

The Christian should give to the necessities of the saints, assisting with prayer and spiritual comfort, as well as with financial and temporal needs. “Given to hospitality” is self-explanatory.

Rom. 12:14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

How do we “bless them which persecute” us? One way would be to follow Paul’s advice in verse 20: “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.”

Comment: Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:44,45).

Q: How should we pray for those who hate and persecute us?

A: The word “bless” is a broad term. Jesus’ advice to “pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” is one aspect of blessing. Just as love is kindness, tenderness, pity, compassion, and forgiveness, so there are different ways of “blessing” someone. When Jesus said, “But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also,” he did not mean that if an enemy hits us on the cheek, we are to say, “Hit me on the other cheek” (Matt. 5:39). Jesus meant that we should not respond with resistance and render evil for evil. Incidentally, his supposed words at the Crucifixion, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” are spurious (Luke 23:34).

Q: Are Stephen’s words also spurious, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60)?

A: No, not to our knowledge. However, Stephen was not blessing his persecutors but was trying to modify their punishment in stoning him to death. We are to rest in the confidence of God’s words, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay” (Rom. 12:19). Sometimes people who act are not the main instigators, for they are excited and stimulated into rash behavior by the advice of another. The degree of responsibility is slightly less if someone has played on their emotions.

Comment: David’s answer to the men who wanted to kill Shimei for cursing him were to the effect, “Leave him alone. It could be that the Lord sent him to mock me.” David had a good attitude.

Reply: Yes, David’s conduct and character were a manifestation of not rendering evil for evil. Shimei’s death was carried out later, after David’s death.

Comment: For many years, Joseph kept the right heart condition, so that when his brothers finally came to Egypt and he revealed his identity, he said, “Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life” (Gen. 45:5). In other words, “The Lord meant the experience for good.”

Reply: Yes, the principle is that the Lord will take care of enemies of the truth and those who persecute His people.

Another subject is persecution by fellow brethren. Jesus said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Matt. 5:11). He also said, “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16:2). This type of persecution by *professing* Christians is a little different from persecution by *true* Christians. Many nuances of persecution occur among the true brotherhood. For example, the reputation of one of the Lord’s true saints could be damaged. Paul said, “Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father,” but on another occasion, he instructed that we are to “admonish one another” (1 Tim. 5:1; Rom. 15:14). Generally speaking, the person receiving the rebuke does not see the wisdom of it, but others thank God for the rest of their life for the helpful correction.

Paul was giving general rules for behavioral conduct that should be characteristic of the Christian. Of course there are exceptions and modifying circumstances. On one memorable occasion, we saw a brother exercising outstanding kindness to a sister. Not only were his efforts tender and moving to witness, but they were natural, revealing his goodness. The point is that circumstances sometimes mitigate behavior or what the normal reaction would be.

Comment: There are times when, for conscience’ sake, we have to take stronger measures and

let our displeasure be known. To not so indicate would displease the Holy Spirit, yet our words or action might be misunderstood by the recipient, who feels he has done a very noble thing. We must not compromise principle where we know something to be a fact, even though our stand will be misconstrued.

“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.” A “curse” is stronger than a rebuke. We are not to retaliate or revile one who persecutes us. Instead we should bless those in the world who persecute us and ask the Father to forgive them. With those in the brotherhood who persecute us, we are not to render evil for evil. In receiving the experience, we should hope that by our own actions and words, the persecutors might realize their wrong. We should pray that God will give them the realization of the wrong so that they can make amends and not lose their crown. Certainly we are to be submissive to the experience and pray for the individuals. We are to “bless, and curse not.” Since persecution is a form of “cursing,” we are to pray for the persecutor, thinking of his ultimate salvation. “Cursing” would be disowning a person forever, writing him off in regard to his ultimate destiny.

Rom. 12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Comment: There is “a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance” (Eccl. 3:4).

Again these are general rules that should not be contradicted except under extraordinary circumstances. For instance, if one were living in rioting and drunkenness, spiritually speaking, we would not want to join the crowd by giving our approval. The usual policy is to weep with those who weep. Brethren who try to cheer up one who is weeping just sink the individual into further sorrow and despondency. If one habitually reacts to certain situations in a way the Lord does not approve, we can be sure He will tender that lesson to the individual in some form or manner of instruction.

“Rejoice with them that do rejoice.” This general rule applies when one is *properly* rejoicing. Brethren who are taciturn by nature should, through scriptural instruction and experiences, be able to ameliorate that characteristic. And those who are overly exuberant will receive some sobering experiences to educate them. The final exam occurs when we finish our course. Only then will we know if we have been a more-than-overcomer or just an overcomer. And of course failures will not hear the result.

Comment: Another way to express verse 15 is, “Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Cor. 12:26).

Reply: Yes, that is a general rule, but exceptions do exist. We should have a sensitivity to the brotherhood.

Comment: Sometimes it is imperative that we ask for assistance. If pride keeps us from asking, we cannot expect to get all the answers.

Reply: That is true.

Rom. 12:16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Comment: For the latter part of this verse, the *Diaglott* has, “Regard not high things, but conform yourself to lowly. Do not become wise in your own estimation.”

Reply: Paul was speaking about the rapport between brethren and cautioning against being high-minded toward others. We are to treat all brethren (rich and poor) with equal sympathy, interest, and consideration. All are brethren *of Christ*; all are of the same family. We are all of God in Christ Jesus.

“Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.” We are not to show partiality to those with more of this world’s goods. The Apostle James said, “For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?” (James 2:2-4).

“Be not wise in your own conceits.” One of the dangers among the Great Company class is the disposition to be wise in their own conceits, yet the trait is not recognized in that fashion. Just as Elihu is not recognized as being a picture of the Great Company, so having too high an estimation of self has been the experience of the Great Company down through the age. In fact, Jude 8 warns of a class who “speak evil of dignities,” showing that this conceit can be very dangerous when exercised against one of the Lord’s true saints. The Christian must consider his behavior both among the brotherhood and in the world.

Comment: The Apostle Peter said, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Pet. 5:6).

“Mind not [the] high things [merely], but condescend to men of low estate.” In other words, we do not always have to gear our meetings to babes, but there should be a balance. The word “condescend” recognizes different levels. For example, God *condescended* to deal with man through Jesus.

Rom. 12:17 **Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.**

Recompensing evil for evil is the worldly spirit. For a man to not do so is considered cowardly. To obey this counsel, “recompense to no man evil for evil,” is hard for fallen man to do. This statement usually pertains to not rendering evil to one who has rendered evil to us. Our prayer should be, “Father, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass *against us*.”

“Provide things honest in the sight of all men [the brotherhood as well as the unconsecrated].” The Christian is sent out as an emissary to let his light shine in the world—not just with doctrinal and witnessing light but also in conduct. Paul said to “abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22).

Comment: To the Corinthians, Paul said, “Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:21).

Rom. 12:18 **If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.**

The thought is, “If it be possible—that is, as much as is under our control and would be consistent with supreme love, service, honor, and obedience to God—we are to live peaceably with all men.” This general rule applies where principle is not violated.

Comment: There are times when it is not possible to live peaceably with a neighbor.

Reply: Yes, sometimes it is necessary to inform the authorities.

Comment: Another example would be brutality to pets, which is an intolerable situation that must be reported to the police.

Rom. 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Verse 19 is related to verse 17, “Recompense to no man evil for evil,” and verse 18, “If it be possible, ... live peaceably with all.” We are not to avenge ourselves “but rather give place unto wrath [by getting out of the way of opponents and their wrath].” Why did the translators supply the word “rather”? There are mitigating circumstances where we would not give place unto wrath, but our *general* disposition would be to do so.

Comment: Two proverbs are related. “The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression” (Prov. 19:11). “Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee” (Prov. 20:22).

Verse 19 is speaking of wrath that is visited *upon us*. The advice is that we should not avenge ourselves; that is, generally speaking, we are to suffer the wrong—especially if the suffering is for righteousness’ sake. Then we will gain credits for making our calling and election sure. However, where principle is involved when wrath is exercised against us, we are to maintain our integrity. For example, in the days of the Inquisition, the victim was pressured to recant, to deny his former faith.

“Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” God will exercise vengeance for wrongs done willfully to the consecrated.

Rom. 12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Coming immediately after the instruction to avenge not ourselves, for vengeance is the Lord’s, this verse manifests one form of blessing those who curse, persecute, and abuse us. Instead of rendering evil for evil, we render good in considering their welfare. The thought of heaping “coals of fire” on the head of an enemy is also in Proverbs 25:21,22, “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.” On the one hand, God will repay, but on the other hand, if we exercise this type of blessing on an opponent, or enemy, we get credits as a reward. Such conduct on our part will make an enemy ashamed of his own conduct.

Rom. 12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

To not be overcome with evil is hard to do, because the continual warfare of the Christian is not to succumb, or submit, to evil and wrongdoing.

Comment: The *Berean Manual* states in effect, “Do not allow the trials of life to make you bitter, vindictive, cold, or unsympathetic. Aim to overcome evil and evildoers. Keep on doing good whether or not it melts the opposition.”

Interrelationship and Summation of Romans 12:17-21

We are to recompense no man with evil for evil, for God will repay. We should not retaliate when someone is abusive in either tongue or action. What do we do then—nothing? No, we just should not render evil for evil. The following are helpful guidelines.

1. Respond tenderly, for a soft answer turns away wrath (Prov. 15:1).
2. Overcome evil with good.
3. “Give place unto [get out of the way of] wrath.” This advice does not pertain to evil done to the Church or to a principle. Rather, it pertains to something done to us *personally*. Generally speaking, we should suffer the wrong. In trivial matters, we should recognize the evil but not retaliate or seek vengeance.

We are to distinguish between a worldly person and a brother in Christ. As Christians, we expect persecutions and misunderstandings in the world, for “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Such persecution should be received and endured patiently, unless doing so would injure the Church or the truth. For example, the Pastor was justified in exposing the wrong done to him by slander in the newspapers.

With regard to the Church, if evil is done to us by a brother, a trivial matter should be treated differently from a deliberate evil. In the latter case, if we are offended, we should go to the brother, and if he repents, we should forgive him (Matt. 18:15; Luke 17:3). Luke uses the terminology “if he repent,” and Matthew says, “If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” If the brother will not hear us, we may take one or two witnesses to determine if a wrong was done. In other words, witnesses ascertain if the facts that are mentioned are correct, but they are not to judge the case. They just verify the facts by hearing *both* sides. A decision is not to be rendered until the class receives the matter as a church trial, and a trial should be held only in serious cases of a wrong against a brother. If the witnesses taken feel that a wrong has not been committed, that the facts are mixed up and wrong, then the case should be dropped.

Luke 17:3,4 states that if a brother trespasses against us, we are to rebuke him by telling him his fault. If he repents, we should forgive him. This is the basis of forgiveness when a brother trespasses against a brother. In the Lord’s Prayer, we ask God to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others, the principle being that God forgives us because we repent and ask. Therefore, we are to forgive our brethren when they repent and ask.

We must understand these small matters now and grasp the *principles* if we would be judges beyond the veil. To call attention to a fault is not rendering evil for evil. If properly done, the rebuke can be instructive and constructive—and hence is actually rendering good for evil.

Verse 17: “Provide things honest [honorable things] in the sight of all men.” The Revised Standard reads, “Take thought for what is noble in the sight of all”; that is, identify the injustice openly, fairly, and impartially, and think of the other person’s welfare. We should bring out all facts, both favorable and unfavorable, in stating that an injustice was done. It is noble to also bring out the facts that are unfavorable to ourselves.

Jesus rebuked classes, not individuals, but the apostles at times pointed out names. What is the distinction? Brethren who sinned were named because they were more responsible, whereas the scribes and Pharisees were not followers of Jesus. (Incidentally, Jesus rebuked individually on occasion, but the names are not given in Scripture.)

Verse 18: “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” As much as possible without defiling conscience, we should live peaceably with all men and not be given to strife. If there is continual conflict in an ecclesia, it can be more profitable to meet elsewhere. However, there can be a *legitimate* division of spirit among brethren. For example, Paul and Barnabas had a dispute and decided to separate when Paul refused to have Mark accompany

them. Paul properly felt that Mark had shown irresponsibility by reneging in the midst of the first missionary journey (Acts 15:36-40).

What is the lesson? We should not in every case just forget our differences under the guise of “love.” The name Barnabas means “comforter, a gentle and gracious personality.” Evidently, Paul’s action shocked Mark and caused him to change his attitude and remain steadfast. This is the same Mark who wrote the Gospel. Very few were loyal to Paul at the end of his ministry, but Mark was one of them (2 Tim. 4:11). He had learned his lesson!

Verse 19: “Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath.” This advice applies primarily to the world, although sometimes a distinction is to be made in the Church.

Verse 20: We are to feed our enemy if he hungers, thereby heaping “coals of fire on his head.” In other words, we are to help our enemy under a dire circumstance, but we should not go out of our way to help the world in everyday matters, for the Church’s main activity is to preach the gospel. By showing kindness to our enemy, we might prick his conscience and thus kindle a spark of good that helps him to change his attitude. In essence, we would be saving our enemy’s life—doing good to him with the hope of a return of good.

Verse 21: “Be not overcome of evil.” An example of being overcome with evil is to let a “root of bitterness” spring up (Heb. 12:15). The thought of “overcome evil with good” is that by doing good, we might change the character of an evil one.

Rom. 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers [civil authorities or governments]. For there is no power but [what is permitted] of God.” This counsel is one-sided, but other Scriptures balance it. In addressing the Christians in Rome, Paul did not mix in exceptions because he wanted to get across a particular thought.

Comment: The Prophet Daniel said, “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: ... he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan. 2:20,21).

“The powers that be are ordained [permitted] of God”; that is, they exist by divine permission. In explaining King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great image, Daniel said to him, “The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.... Thou art ... [the] head of gold” (Dan. 2:37,38). The words “hath given” mean that God allowed man to try to restore an Edenic paradise. Earlier, prior to the Flood, during the first dispensation, God allowed the holy angels to try to uplift mankind, but they failed to bring about the desired results (Heb. 2:5). The angels sang with joy when they saw man created. When man fell and experienced sickness and death, they commiserated and asked God for the opportunity to try to help. God granted permission for their dealings with fallen mankind, but in their mission, some of the angels stayed down here and became contaminated. In the second dispensation, God permitted Satan to take over. The demonic power over mankind has been so awesome that Satan is called the supreme authority above earthly kings, who themselves have been allowed opportunities to try to govern in a proper manner. As a whole, however, they have abused their power.

Down through the Gospel Age, many have given advice on verse 1 along the following lines: “No matter how evil the character or morals of the leader are, Christians are to obey the civil authority.” Generally speaking, the statement is true, that is, where principle is not involved with regard to the Christian’s behavior. When persecution arises, the believer should try to go

to an area where it is possible to live more peaceably in the development of character.

Comment: Peter wrote, “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well” (1 Pet. 2:13,14).

Reply: The advice is the same as Paul’s, but it is interesting that when Peter and John were commanded “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus,” Peter said, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:15-20). On another occasion, when Peter was miraculously released from prison and resumed his teaching in the Temple, the authorities reminded him and the other apostles of the command not to teach in Jesus’ name. What was Peter’s reply? “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Thus Peter contradicted the “higher powers [or authorities]” because principle was involved. The point is that normally speaking, we are to be like ambassadors or envoys in a foreign country who are expected to observe the rules of the land—except when scriptural principles are violated. In reality, our citizenship is in heaven.

The Roman emperors were considered gods on earth by the people. Paul’s strong advice counseled submission because Christians were saying *unnecessary* things that got them arrested and executed. Jesus’ advice was to flee if persecution came (Matt. 10:23). Paul was saying, “Do not malign the rulers and say they are of Satan unless absolutely necessary.” He was counteracting the danger of Christians’ becoming martyrs *foolishly and needlessly*, even though the principle was right and the emperor was wrong. Paul’s advice was necessary because of the *detestable* emperors. In other words, Christians are not to deliberately jeopardize their lives by flaunting danger. If, however, they are arrested through no fault of their own, they should submit. A danger is that brethren can become so distracted in life by side issues and troubles that they neglect their Christian duties. The objective is to be faithful so that they can be with Jesus.

Rom. 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

“They that resist [authorities] shall receive to themselves damnation [Greek *krima*].” Such disobedience results in a verdict of judgment for the Christian, that is, the loss of his crown. Those who resist miss out on the high calling but can still be part of the Great Company.

This advice relieved Christians of feeling conscience-bound to interfere with evil practices by the government. For example, Christians should pay taxes. However, if a *specific* tax were levied for a wrong purpose, such as war or building an idol to a heathen god, the Christian would be obligated to disobey. Paul’s advice also helped those who were arrested to say that their religion taught subjection to the higher powers. They could say, “Christ’s Kingdom is of another world.” Many Christians were released when this approach was followed.

Subsequent to Paul’s day, many Christians had a chip on their shoulder and as a result were imprisoned, exiled, or put to death. Brought on by their own imprudent behavior, these sufferings were not reckoned as suffering for righteousness’ sake. As Paul was saying here in verse 2, whoever resists the power of the civil authorities—except when principle is involved—shall receive judgment.

Comment: This advice was given while the Times of the Gentiles were in effect. Because of where we live on the stream of time, Gentile Times having ended, circumstances will afford the feet members an opportunity to speak out in harmony with the John the Baptist picture.

Reply: Yes, that principle is applicable as an exception. Since Gentile Times ended in 1914, the situation has changed. However, we must be careful of our motive. The feet members will not be violating Paul's advice when they rebuke the union of civil and religious powers at the end of the age. Their speaking out will be done according to instruction from above.

A caution is to be noted, however. Even though Gentile Times have legally expired, we should not complain about the powers that be. As Christians, we are to avoid political issues, and much of what we hear through the media is distorted anyway. *But when the church-state union comes into power, we are to speak out.*

Rom. 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

“Rulers are not a terror to good works” is a broad-brush declaration, for exceptions do occur. Paul's whole string of advice is the norm for most occasions, and it should be our *habit* of behavior. However, there are exceptions, for some rulers are a terror to good works.

By upholding law and order, rulers are usually a terror “to the evil.” They do not want to get involved in racial, religious, etc., strife but just want their subjects to obey them. To exercise punitive powers is stressful and time-consuming, so they would rather be somewhat lenient in these areas. For the most part, Rome ruled in a lenient fashion, the exceptions being rulers like Nero and Caligula, who were reprobates and a terror. With maniacal behavior, Nero burned Christians on crosses in Rome while the city itself was burning. The Holy(?) Inquisition was a period of severe persecution. Incidentally, any government is better than no government, which would be a state of anarchy.

“Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.” In other words, if Christians obey the laws of the land that do not infringe on the principle of obeying God rather than man, they shall have praise of the powers that be.

In every generation, it seems as if Christians can live in relative peace for 20 to 25 years even under an evil power, but then will come a severe trial and persecution by the government. Christians are to view the persecution as God's providence.

Rom. 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

“For he is the minister of God to thee for good.” A ruler or the ruling arrangement is the representative of God for the good of Christians to make their calling and election sure. The pronoun “he” can refer to either an individual ruler or the whole governmental arrangement.

The term “minister of God” is sometimes used in a more elevated sense pertaining to one who is consecrated, but probably civil rulers are “ministers of God” unto the Church because of what Daniel said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.... Thou art this head of gold” (Dan. 2:37,38). Some United States coins affirm this thought to a greater or lesser extent.

“But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” In the Old Testament, the word “evil” sometimes has a connotation that is different from the contemporary thought of being morally corrupt or unjust and worthy of extreme punishment; that is, it can have the

thought of “trouble.” God said to the nation of Israel, “Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?” meaning that when a calamity occurred under the Jewish arrangement, it was the Lord’s retribution (Amos 3:6). Of course we are living in the Christian dispensation when “evil,” as used here in Romans, has the signification of wrongdoing.

Q: Is God a “revenger” in the sense of granting correction to the wrongdoer?

A: Yes, God is “a revenger to execute wrath [or judgment] upon him that doeth evil [wrong].”

Comment: In this case, the wrongdoing would be a violation of national law.

Reply: Yes. Usually the laws of the land are predicated on ancient laws. United States laws are based on the Judaic Law. In Britain, one could not be a good lawyer unless he read Gladstone, and Gladstone said that one could not be a good lawyer unless he read the Bible.

Rom. 13:5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

Christians are to be subject to governmental authority for the sake of not only wrath but also conscience. However, there is a distinction. If, for example, a decree comes that prohibits us from having a Bible or worshipping as we choose, then we should oppose the government. The Apostle Peter said, “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully” (1 Pet. 2:19). In other words, we are to submit to the powers that be when they execute us either for things we properly did for the Lord or for things we are wrongly accused of doing. As Christians, we represent a cause, and our conscience is sensitive. Purporting to be a Christian, we are supposed to lead an exemplary life to the extent possible, imitating in the deepest sense the teachings of Jesus. If we disobey, we bring shame on the cause of true Christianity—*unless scriptural principle is involved*.

Comment: Since the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, we have to question our motives lest we disobey for the wrong reason (Jer. 17:9). The general rule is to be subject to the ruling authorities “not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.”

Generally speaking, it is wrong for a Christian to oppose the powers that be. Therefore, if a Christian is punished by civil authorities as a result of disobeying God’s counsel, he is getting his just deserts; that is, he is receiving “wrath” for disobedience. Since, as Christians, we are not to be involved in politics or in trying to overturn the government, our conscience should be quieted in this regard, and thereby we would be obeying God. “Wrath,” then, pertains to any repercussion that takes place for which we are responsible because of disobedience, and by our not violating God’s commands, our “conscience” should be properly allayed.

Rom. 13:6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

“For this cause pay ye tribute.” A “tribute” is a tax. Jesus paid taxes to the Roman government when he miraculously produced a coin from the mouth of a fish to pay for Peter and himself.

Comment: Verse 6 is another general rule. It would not apply in the case of a specific tax that violates conscience, for we are to obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29).

Reply: That is true, but such cases are relatively few.

Comment: A tax may be passed in connection with the coming church-state hour of power that

we would have to oppose.

Reply: Yes, for conscience' sake, the faithful Christian throughout the Gospel Age has opposed laws or taxes that contradict God's principles, but that is especially true now, since Gentile Times have ended. From God's standpoint, that time period legally ended in 1914, so even though the Gentiles are still in power, the fact that their right to that office has lapsed gives the Christian more liberty to speak than hitherto.

For the third time, Paul called civil rulers God's "minister(s)" (verses 4 and 6). They attend "continually upon this very thing." Generally speaking, the office of a ruler preserves law and order purportedly for the commonweal of the subjects underneath his authority.

Rom. 13:7 **Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.**

Here the word "tribute" is used from the standpoint of those who are in lesser positions or lower echelons of authority. We should still render tribute, pay taxes, to such individuals or authorities. For example, to obtain an automobile license requires the payment of a fee to the commissioner of motor vehicles. Conscience is not involved in such matters.

"Render ... custom to whom custom" is due. For instance, when using the address "most noble" for Festus, who was in a position of authority, Paul was following the custom (Acts 26:25). Likewise, if a person is a medical doctor or a PhD, it is proper to render respect and recognition by addressing him with his title. Of course in the world, if a professor by law is talking to another professor by law, they can speak in a fraternal manner, for they are equals in education. With individuals who are known as Reverend and Very Reverend, or even with the pope, we should try to give some deference without using those titles. The Holy Spirit can operate to supply us with the words to say, so that we give recognition of their esteem by others without violating our own conscience. Jesus gave us guidelines when he said, "Call no man your [spiritual] father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matt. 23:9). We should pray for tact but also for courage in standing up for truth and principle. If our words and attitude are right, people will respect us, realizing that we do not have a bitter spirit.

"Render ... honour to whom honour" is due. To say "Your Honor" or even "Reverend" is permissible, but the Scriptures explicitly tell us not to call any man "Father" in a religious sense. Thus we can address a minister by his title ("Doctor," "Right Reverend," "Pastor," "Bishop," etc.), even though we do not agree with it. Bro. Russell used titles in talking with or writing letters to various ministers. The point is that we do not question whether a person is *worthy of his title*, for the Lord will take care of that matter in due time.

Rendering "honour" refers to a title or a degree from a school—whether in philosophy, medicine, theology, or another area. Even among ourselves, if a person has a degree, it would not be improper to address him as such in a business relationship, that is, outside of the Church. In other words, we should not let brotherly love deprive a person of his honor or distinction.

Rom. 13:8 **Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.**

Rom. 13:9 **For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**

“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another” both in the brotherhood and among the public. One proof that the world is included is the commandment “Thou shalt not steal,” for we should not steal from either brethren or the unconsecrated. How interesting—a manifestation of love is that we do not commit adultery, kill, steal, bear false witness, or covet another person’s goods! While these commandments seem negative, they show that we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us (Matt. 7:12). For example, we would not want others to lie to us unless there were a valid reason. People extemporize in these areas, but the Christian, having the Holy Spirit, is supposed to have a little more common sense.

In another sense, “owe no man any thing” means we should not deprive anyone of his distinction, for example, the address “Your excellency.” In other words, we are not to stop to consider whether one is a reprobate. What we “owe” *always* is LOVE. We should never feel we have achieved enough love. Therefore, we are trying to pay back the debt so that one day we will be accredited as attaining to and maintaining the mark of perfect love and thus make our calling and election sure.

“If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” With this commandment, Paul was demonstrating the bottom line, the common denominator of love. This commandment, the Golden Rule, the Royal Law, is the foundation for the different levels of love.

Starting with verse 8, Paul began to speak about Christian development by saying, “Love one another.” Here is the positive approach with regard to our *own* character. Paul’s advice was constructive, telling us to love our neighbor as ourself. Again, however, a balance is to be achieved, for we are not to love our neighbor *more* than self. With God, however, we should give *our all*.

Paul was switching tracks here—as in a junction in a railroad. First, he said, “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing.” Then he began to switch tracks and tell where we should be in Christian life. In our development, we should not commit adultery, kill, steal, bear false witness, covet, etc. Our course is briefly summarized as loving our neighbor as ourself. We are to follow this commandment and not negate the honor that is due others. The tendency is to withhold deference because we are thinking of one’s character, but that would be a negative approach. Instead we should be developing our own character, from a constructive standpoint, to be more Christlike in our dealings with others. That thought ties in with verse 10, “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour.”

Rom. 13:10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

As Christians, we want to do more than just fulfill the Law, for if possible, we want to be more-than-overcomers. Loving one’s neighbor in fulfilling the Law is our *duty*; it is *duty love*. Not everyone can go above that level, and to do so is a freewill offering. To live above this level, to have the spirit of the Law, requires zeal and a desire to please God more and more. That kind of love cannot be regimented, but Paul exhorted the Christian with expressions like “I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant.” And he used common sense in many cases.

We are to love our neighbor *as ourself*, not more than self. For instance, in their endeavor to be pleasing to God, there could be a tendency to go overboard into a form of idolatry. In trying to show generosity and a lack of selfishness—in trying to demonstrate selflessness—some go overboard and sacrifice their own interests. For example, if we had only one set of *Reprints*, it would be foolish to give them away to a new interest, thus depriving ourself. Instead we

should follow the principle of working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, realizing that God called us to be a saint (Phil. 2:12). We should consider others as *equally* in the family of God but not more than that. Therefore, we should not sacrifice to the extent of jeopardizing our own spiritual development. If we have two coats—that is, an extra coat—we can give one to a person who is in want, but if we have only one coat, we should not give it away. We are to provide things decent and honest for our family and for ourself, within reason.

Comment: That principle applies to our time as well. Some members of our own family, neighbors, or even brethren could demand an inordinate amount of our time. It is right to give a portion of our time but not to the extent that we would jeopardize our own studies and other areas of consecration.

Reply: Yes. With God, it is different, for we are to love Him with *all* our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Rom. 13:11 **And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.**

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.” Paul made this statement in the *beginning* of the Gospel Age, and we are living in the *end* of the Gospel Age. His words are an *urgent* reminder that the time is short, “for now is our salvation nearer than when we [first] believed [when we initially consecrated].”

Rom. 13:12 **The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.**

How true that “the night is far spent,” for we are nearing the very end of the age. “The day is at hand.” The term “day” can mean the day of our salvation, the day of the salvation of the world, or the day of enlightenment. There are two kinds of enlightenment. (1) Nighttime is from midnight until dawn. (2) Daytime begins at 6 a.m., when the sun comes over the horizon and everyone sees. In speaking of the dawning, the sunrise, Jesus said, “Are there not twelve hours in the day?” (John 11:9). At midnight, the “a.m.” hours begin, and although the time is getting close to dawn, it is still pitch dark.

Life goes by quickly. As we get older, the days seem to pass even more swiftly. Therefore, from the standpoint of the night being far spent, even our own personal life is very brief, so we should diligently apply ourselves.

When Paul wrote these words at the beginning of the Gospel Age, it was the fifth (thousand-year) day. The night was far spent because, roughly speaking, five sevenths of the night were already in the past. But the principle also applies from a practical Christian standpoint, for our personal life is very short, and it could be sidetracked either with lusts of the flesh or with strife and bickering. Such things distract us and consume our time and effort when we should be putting on the Lord Jesus Christ (verse 14).

Paul continued to speak to the Christian: “Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” The “armour of light” includes the various components of armor that are mentioned in Ephesians 6:11-17.

“Put on the *whole* armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood [merely], but against principalities,

against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

We need not only intellectual armor, the “helmet [or hope] of salvation,” but also the “breastplate of righteousness,” meaning good moral deportment.

Rom. 13:13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

“Let us walk honestly,” that is, openly and without hypocrisy, cover-up, or deceit. The ideal situation is that a Christian’s good works and obedience result in a natural fashion and are not an ostentatious display.

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day [as though we were in the Kingdom Age and Christ were reigning].” At that time, we certainly would not lie, steal, commit adultery, covet, etc.—things that are done under cover of literal or figurative darkness in the sense of behind one’s back or secretly in the heart.

“Let us walk ... not in rioting and drunkenness.” In examining these and subsequent categories, we should keep in mind that Paul was talking to Christians. “Rioting” is having a good time in excess, the implication being that one is not taking his consecration seriously. The individual wants all the enjoyment of being a Christian without the constrictions of Christian living. He seeks pleasure. Of course this characteristic is sometimes very obvious in the nominal Church with social get-togethers, Bingo, bazaars, carnivals, etc. Among the consecrated, a manifestation would be having fellowship for fellowship’s sake. Socializing has its place, but it can be dangerous, for when we are happy, we may let our guard down. If we cannot properly reason with a man who is inebriated, then to a certain extent, we cannot reason with someone who is overly happy. “Drunkenness” is being filled with the spirit of the world, whereas the Christian should be filled with the Holy Spirit.

“Let us walk ... not in chambering and wantonness.” The usual thought is that to lead a decent, moral life is being a Christian, whereas the truly consecrated deny self and take up their cross and follow Jesus.

Comment: According to Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, “chambering” has the thought of a bed or a couch.

Reply: Yes, the word means to lie on a couch, which fits in with the next word, “wantonness,” or sensuality.

“Let us walk ... not in strife and envying.” “Strife” is contention, yet contending is proper if it is for the “faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). There is a difference between brethren on the subjects of the reign and the smiting of the image. Both sides think they are contending for the faith—those who think the reign of Christ over the world is future and those who think the reign began in 1874. When we contend for the faith, we should be careful to have a solid foundation and scriptural support for what we believe. Otherwise, it is better to keep quiet. As we learn and develop, we express ourselves.

To really have the truth and contend for it is admirable. However, if we are in error and we keep bringing up a particular subject as an issue in fellowship, then we are being contentious. For that reason, the Pastor suggested that if a brother in the class feels he is being suppressed and is not having ample opportunity to air his opinion—if he keeps bringing up the subject and differs with the teaching in the class—then once a year that party should be given a half hour or an hour to get the subject off his chest. After that, he should refrain from the subject for the rest of the year lest the class be divided.

In trying to advance a truth, we should treat both sides of the issue—why we believe one way and why we do not believe the other way. Usually, those who are dogmatic present only their own view, and they do not tell why the opposing view does not make sense. Therefore, out of fairness, we should discuss *both* sides of a subject. We should (1) give the rationale for our belief, showing why we think a certain doctrine is more reasonable, and (2) also tell why we think the other side is irrational. Of course if a particular Scripture is being discussed, that is another matter, for we can stay right on the text. In contradistinction, a subject is a theme that puts different thoughts and Scriptures together. In that circumstance, we should follow the principle “Come now, and let us *reason* together” (Isa. 1:18).

Strife is rare, but there have been occasions of cursing or even slapping in the ecclesia. The latter occurred in a testimony meeting where brethren were supposed to tell one another what their faults were. The longer one is consecrated, the more experiences he is exposed to. There may even be an instance of one going into Second Death. For example, a consecrated individual gave evidence that he thoroughly believed Jesus is the Savior and then later called him “Antichrist.” In another instance, a pilgrim brother became an atheist. As we look back over the years and reflect on how many brethren we knew, it is sad to realize that a number return to the world or go into the nominal Church. Some turn in all of their *Volumes* and *Reprints*. We are in an *endurance* race.

Comment: The Apostle John said, “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it” (1 John 5:16).

Reply: Prayers should cease for one who passes the point of no return.

“Envying” applies to a number of areas. We should not envy the position, praise, or service of another. Although it is not dishonorable to desire the office of elder, the one who desires this “good work” should search his motives, asking, “Why do I want to be an elder?” (1 Tim. 3:1). The desire for praise or for a position of authority would be an improper motive. We should also be careful not to envy the possessions or money of others. With employment, sometimes the old man reasons with the new man, saying, “If you accept this position, you will get a bigger salary and more influence to use in the service of the truth.” Usually, however, a more important position works against one’s consecration because it requires more and more time, and the individual does not know when to stop. In all matters pertaining to our consecration, we should try to be as honest as possible in evaluating our own motives.

Comment: James 3:13-15 reads, “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation [conduct] his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.”

Reply: Yes, the reasoning of the old man can get the ascendancy over the new creature. How do we know these things? Jesus tells us that we cannot get good fruit from a tree or bush that has thistles (Matt. 7:16-20). Character is manifested by the product. If something wrong is in the heart, it is bound to come out somewhere. The subject matter that is constantly in one’s mind will be expressed verbally one way or another. If, when a person speaks, the words are always criticism and never upbuilding, that is indicative of a wrong heart condition. We measure the product of one’s conduct or speaking by the *habit of thought*, not by isolated comments, for after all, we are still in the body of flesh and make mistakes with the tongue and with an act. But the habit, or pattern, of an individual should be apparent. As the saying goes, “Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.”

Rom. 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

“Knowing ... that now it is high time to awake out of sleep ... put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Verses 11-14 are even truer now, at the end of the age, than in Paul’s day. However, life has gone fast for all Christians in all ages. The lesson is to utilize time well and not to be sidetracked with the lusts of the flesh or bickering. Instead we should put “on the Lord Jesus Christ,” an expression used in the Greek theater in the apostles’ day. An actor studied his script so thoroughly that when he acted, he was fully absorbed emotionally and acted the part perfectly. Therefore, to “put ... on the Lord Jesus Christ” means that we should study his life—everything he did and said—so that we will know how to meet the experiences and situations of life. In order to keep the level at the highest standard, we should always ask, “What would Jesus do?” Our main objective is to be a follower of *Christ*. He is our ideal, not another Christian.

Other Scriptures are needed to balance the statement “make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Of course we have to provide for necessities, including our health, so the thought is that we should not be overanxious for the morrow for the flesh. We should make decisions that will benefit us spiritually, especially if the opposite decision would benefit the flesh. Our main goal in life is to “put ... on the Lord Jesus Christ.” We are to be careful with regard to the fleshly interests of life, and if a decision is between our spiritual welfare and the flesh, what is spiritual has the priority. In other words, we should not provide for the flesh in decision making, especially if to do so would jeopardize the spiritual.

Rom. 14:1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

The mature Christian should be able to discern one who is weak in faith. Thus the Church can judge some things. The judging of one’s destiny is a wrong type of judgment, but one who is weak in the faith can be discerned.

The usual disposition of an ecclesia or a group would be to try to impose its viewpoint to purportedly strengthen the weak faith of such an individual. If human reasoning were followed, the brethren would probably do the wrong thing because the tendency of the flesh would be to use every occasion to get in some kind of valuable comment to supposedly strengthen the brother’s faith. Notice, however, that Paul said to “receive” one who is weak in faith. We should not think there is so little time that we have to immediately strengthen the

individual. Rather, we should just let spiritual lessons take their course, and God will guide the instruction so that it will be seasonal. Brethren do not have to provoke or force the situation, for Providence will take care of the matter.

Comment: “Doubtful disputations” are less important issues over which there may be different understanding. The Revised Standard has, “As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions.” The NIV has, “Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.”

Reply: Paul did not say we could not discuss such differences, but they should not be discussed and forced with one who is weak in faith.

Rom. 14:2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

Now Paul began to discuss the subject of food and differences of opinion over what could be eaten. Some believe in and live on a vegetarian diet. In certain instances, individuals follow such a diet for health reasons or because of a quirk in their system, but if they live on a vegetarian diet out of religious convictions, we must be very careful not to get them to violate their conscience. However, if those who feel they should eat only herbs are familiar with the Bible, they should know not to preach the gospel of herbs, which is sometimes done. There are individuals whose main topic of conversation is frequently diet, food, and vitamins. Of course when these subjects come up naturally, it is fitting to give due consideration to them. However, some continually give advice along these lines, and when a spiritual topic is introduced, there is a tendency to be negative.

Studying the *whole* Word of God helps us to see that if we make food a gospel, we are getting off the subject and are weak in faith. Paul declared the whole counsel of God and did not compromise principle. For example, the statement of verse 2 would be compromised by omitting the words “who is weak” and just saying, “For one believeth that he may eat all things: another eateth herbs.”

Comment: For the word “herbs,” the Revised Standard has “vegetables.”

As Christians, the Jews were more apt to put stipulations on diet. Because of improper food preparation in Rome, many Jews would have been vegetarians. Much of the meat was unclean either from a ceremonial standpoint or from the standpoint of the Law and thus was not kosher.

Rom. 14:3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

Comment: Paul said, “But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ” (1 Cor. 8:12).

Reply: Yes, that Scripture shows how important it is not to sin against conscience. However, the conscience can be educated, and with a newcomer, which is the implication here in Romans, the education should be done in a gradual manner. If one becomes interested in the truth, and especially if he consecrates, we know he was called of God. Therefore, we should recognize him as being in the spiritual family. Nevertheless, the message should not be compromised to cater to the one who is weak in faith. Paul’s point was to use prudence by not getting involved in “doubtful disputations.”

Whether an individual was a Jewish or a Gentile Christian, each was to obey his own

conscience in matters of diet. Neither one was to judge the other, for God had received both. Earlier chapters of the Epistle to the Romans treated Jewish and Gentile Christians in an overall way, telling favorable and unfavorable things about both and discussing their problems. Now Paul was helping them to have a harmonious ecclesia arrangement.

Two thoughts prevailed among the brethren: (1) Everything can be eaten, and (2) meat cannot be eaten. Paul said that from a religious conscientious standpoint, those who felt they could eat anything had a wiser and better perspective. Jesus said, "It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a man but what comes out of it" (Matt. 15:11 paraphrase). If one is hypercritical of another on the subject of diet, he is judging that individual, yet Paul judged in the sense that he said one trend of thought indicated a weakness in faith. We must read further in order to understand his reasoning.

Rom. 14:4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" The practical standpoint pertains to the master-servant relationship in everyday life. We should not criticize a servant but should let his master do the criticizing. If the master is silent, he is satisfied with the servant. On a higher level, the "master" would be Jesus or God Himself. Not only are we all servants of Jesus, our Master, but we are fellow servants. Christians are also God's servants. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto *his servants* things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1). A servant is a bond slave.

"To his own master he standeth or falleth." We all stand or fall before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). "Yea, he [the Christian] shall be holden up: for God [the Master] is able to make him stand." Paul was saying that if God sees one is lacking, He will deal with the problem, and our intervention would just be busybodying.

Comment: An exception to this general principle would be where grievous sin is committed and the ecclesia is required to take action. Paul treated that aspect in 1 Corinthians 5.

Reply: Also, Paul took a strong stand with the Jewish Christians in Galatia, calling them "foolish" for returning to the works of the Law, that is, for mixing the Law with the gospel (Gal. 3:1). Although Paul was *unequivocal* in stating that the Christian is not obligated to be justified by the deeds of the Law, he was saying here in Romans that each Christian should obey his own conscience, even if not eating meat was related to the Law. Why the difference in his counsel?

Paul's Epistle to the Galatians dealt with justification, an *important* doctrinal subject, whereas the issue of meat versus vegetables was a more personal problem in the Roman church. Both are principles, but justification is fundamental and diet is less important (even though conscience must be obeyed).

Rom. 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Rom. 14:6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

Paul continued to reiterate the same principles. Now he brought in one who observed and made mandatory requirements for holy days, such as the sabbath or the Day of Atonement.

The contrast was one who esteemed every day alike. Then Paul said, “Let every man be *fully* persuaded in his own mind.” His point was that whatever course was followed in regard to diet or the sabbath, each Christian was doing this to honor God. In the change from the Law to the grace dispensation, the Lord mercifully allowed time for the new ideas to be grasped.

Not too many years ago, the general view was that Sunday was a day of rest. The attitude of the public has changed radically in the last 50 years or so, and that change has affected Christianity. Incidentally, some preach that we should live each day as though it were our last. This thinking is another aspect of esteeming every day alike.

Back in Paul’s day, those who esteemed one day above another were more likely to be Jewish Christians who continued to observe the sabbath. Paul was trying to show that while a person observed days through religious convictions and that his sensitivity in matters of conscience was to be respected, yet a danger existed, namely, the deception that Christians had to not only believe in Christ but also obey the Law.

Paul mentioned two reasons for avoiding doubtful disputations with regard to diet or the observance of holy days. (1) God called the individual, so we should be careful of his conscience (verse 3). (2) The individual thinks he is serving God with his diet and/or his attitude toward holy days; thus he acts as unto the Lord. The important principle is that every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind. Therefore, each was to obey *his own conscience* in doing things unto the Lord. Two key expressions thus far in this chapter are “him that is weak in the faith” and “let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”

We should go slow with changes in matters that involve the conscience of others, for there is a tendency to get into arguments over these *opinions*. Therefore, we should not bring up issues on which there is a difference in the mind of the newcomer and force him to accept the group opinion immediately. All are fellow sinners in need of the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Some have more understanding in one area and some in another, but all have a relationship with God. We may know we have more understanding on certain subjects, but we should not judge the one who does not. After all, he may know more on other matters than we do. We can view a brother as weak in a particular subject, but we must not consider him weak in his personal relationship to God. To let a man be fully persuaded in his own mind means to let him be persuaded which is the *true* course. We should allow time for him to develop and not force him, or he may in haste act precipitously and defile his conscience.

Paul was *not* saying, “It is not important what we do and believe.” He was *not* saying, “Do not discuss these things.” The point was that brethren should not force an issue but should let each be persuaded in his own way and time. For example, some who did not think there was Spirit begettal in the nominal Church changed their mind after many years and then became *adamant* that others immediately believe the same way. Paul clearly showed where he stood but was saying, “Do not force the issue.” The matter could be discussed but not inordinately. It should be discussed gently and slowly in the hope that those who are weak in faith will be fully persuaded in time. An elder has more responsibility than others in the ecclesia. As a teacher, he should be straight on these issues of conscience—the Law, diet, the sabbath, etc.

Rom. 14:7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

Rom. 14:8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.

Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Whether we live or die, it is “unto the Lord.” Therefore, if those who had different opinions for conscientious purposes

were living a life to please the Lord and had other characteristics that proved their identity, they were to be allowed liberty for a while, but they were not to linger. With the Galatians, the erroneous doctrine of obeying the Law took over. Paul himself had started that class, but what happened subsequently shows how hard it is to maintain a standard. It is very difficult to be generous and flexible and yet be firm for principle. To harmonize love and hate, or love and justice—to have the proper and equal balance—is extremely difficult because we are inclined one way or the other, but that is the schooling of the present life.

This epistle was written about AD 60, and Paul was speaking either about those who were new in the truth or about those to whom the truth on these subjects was new. There is a lack of evidence that the Apostle Peter ever went to Rome—except possibly that city is the location of his crucifixion. Probably this class started as a result of Pentecost (Acts 2:8-11). A great number of Jews lived in Rome, and many in attendance on the Day of Pentecost heard Peter speak and were converted and baptized. They returned to their homeland and formed the class. What is amazing is the number of Christians in this class located in the center of the Roman Empire. In fact, evidence shows that this was the largest ecclesia of Christians in the early Church, yet no apostle visited Rome until Paul near his death. Romans is the first epistle in the New Testament, not because it was written first but because Rome was the most important city in the empire.

Whatever we do should be done “unto the Lord [God].” Hence we are to respect the *motives* of others and their love for God and not judge their final standing with Him. Disobedience may occur, but in the final analysis, the individual may be faithful.

Rom. 14:9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

“To this end Christ both died, and rose.” The words “and revived” are not necessary, for Paul was mathematical. Christ both (1) died and (2) arose so that he might be Lord both (1) of the dead and (2) of the living (two things, not three).

The statement that Jesus is “Lord both of the dead and [the] living” includes the world. Christ is our Lord and Master now, and we are his servants. He is the Lord of the “living dead” and the dead dead, the “living dead” being the consecrated in the present life. Jesus died for the Church and also for mankind. The Church is of primary importance, but the world is loved too.

Rom. 14:10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

We are all fellow sinners in need of the Lord’s mercy and hence are all before the judgment seat of Christ. The Revised Standard has “judgment seat of God,” but the King James and the *Diaglott* have “judgment seat of Christ.” Because verse 11 quotes Isaiah 45:23, which refers to God, the RSV took the liberty of changing verse 10 to the “judgment seat of God,” but other translations say “Christ,” as does 2 Corinthians 5:10. However, the Alexandrian and Sinaitic manuscripts have the “judgment seat of God” in the main text. A subsequent copyist changed the Sinaitic to read the “judgment seat of Christ.” To support their belief, Trinitarians point to these two ancient manuscripts as a proof. How would we explain the seeming discrepancy?

Acts 10:36 reads, “The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:).” Verse 42 of that same chapter can be used as a rebuttal: “And he [Jesus] commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was *ordained of God* to be the Judge of quick and dead.” Trinitarians say that Jesus is the “Lord of all” and “the Judge of [the] quick and [the] dead,” but *God*, who is superior, *appointed* him to be such. And verse 38 tells that *God* anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit of power. Acts 17:31

clarifies the thought: “Because he [God] hath appointed a day, in the which he [God] will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom he [God] hath ordained; whereof he [God] hath given assurance unto all men, in that he [God] hath raised him [Jesus] from the dead.” Both God and Jesus judge in one sense, but actually God does the judging *through* Jesus. The same principle applies in saying that it is the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Christ. The context usually makes clear that God is greater than Jesus, for God is greater than the one He appoints as His servant to perform His will. Two separate entities are involved.

An additional proof is that this chapter repeatedly emphasizes God. “God hath received him” (verse 3). “God is able to make him stand” (verse 4). “He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks” (verse 6). “For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s” (verse 8). Here the word “Lord” unmistakably refers to God based on the previous context. “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (verse 12). “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (verse 17). Jesus taught his disciples to pray to God, again showing two separate entities: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:9,10). “For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men” (verse 18). “For meat destroy not the work of God” (verse 20). “Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God” (verse 22).

Jesus is God’s agent, but the decision of life or Second Death for an individual belongs to God. Christ decides some other matters, but God sets the 144,000 in their positions of honor (John 5:19-24,30). In Jesus’ decisions—whether for the Church or for the world—he acts in harmony with the Father; he does the Father’s will perfectly. However, in regard to life or death matters or positions in glory, the Father decides. In lesser matters, Jesus may act by himself—but *always* in harmony with God. John 5:22 says, “The Father ... hath committed all judgment unto the Son”; that is, the Son deals directly with us now in certain matters and will deal directly with the world in the Kingdom Age. Jesus is closer to us as our Advocate, and as the Mediator to the world in the Kingdom, Jesus will also be in closer contact with mankind at that time, but in the final analysis, all judgment is of God.

Hebrews 13:4 states that God will judge the immoral and the adulterous, for these are more serious matters. With the Church, Jesus trims the wicks and schools and disciplines, but God is involved in more important matters. Jesus said his decisions are just because he seeks and does God’s will. “My judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30). Therefore, in regard to the judgment seat of Christ, the Father will make the *final* decision, but Jesus is the active agent in bringing the Christian to that point. Hearing and dealing with a case is Christ’s work, but the decision, or verdict, is *God’s*.

The judgment seat is not a place or a chair. Jesus deals with the Church first and the world later, and the judgment seat is a *process*. A verdict will come from God sooner or later. After the verdict comes in due time, Jesus will act to set one in the Church, the Great Company, Second Death, eternal life for mankind, etc. With regard to the Second Death class, some will think they are right, but their end is death (Prov. 14:12). An example is those who turn their back on their vows because they think their consecration was not accepted.

Nadab and Abihu both picture Second Death classes (Lev. 10:1,2). Nadab, who was manifestly hardened in sin, was not as conscience-stricken as Abihu. Abihu pictures a gentler element that is not in harmony with God. This class appears better but also goes into Second Death. Word etymology gives us this distinction between Nadab and Abihu. Both sinned, but they had different temperaments. “A God-Fearing Bad Man,” No. 5322, is a good *Reprint* article on this

subject pertaining to Balaam.

Even the Apostle Paul said, “I judge not mine own self” (1 Cor. 4:3). He would not say he was confident of avoiding Second Death (being a “castaway”) until the very end of his life (1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Tim. 4:6-8). And Jesus agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane at the end of his life over whether he would receive life for being faithful in every jot and tittle of the Law (Heb. 5:7). Ananias and Sapphira have been an object lesson to the Church down through the Gospel Age (Acts 5:1-11).

We should beware of disobedience and signs that lead to Second Death. We should be able to recognize that such deeds and actions are wrong. We judge acts but not an individual’s fate. For example, did Ananias and Sapphira go into Second Death? Perhaps. Not a great deal of light is needed for one to go into Second Death. A sin through Adamic weakness can be pardoned, but a sin against the Holy Spirit receives *stripes*; that is, it is not pardoned.

Rom. 14:11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

In the Kingdom Age, every knee will bow to God but through Christ. Similarly of this age, Jesus said, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). We direct our prayer to God but say “in Jesus’ name” or in some other way give deference to the Son for making our prayers possible through his merit. Therefore, every knee in the Kingdom must bow to God but through His representative down here in earth’s atmosphere.

The picture of Joseph in Egypt beautifully illustrates the relationship of Jesus to his Heavenly Father. The commandment was given that every knee must bow to Joseph, but he was in the second chariot. By implication, then, every knee also had to bow to Pharaoh, who was in the first chariot. Joseph was elevated to a very high position, second in the empire, as prime minister underneath Pharaoh, who was superior.

In saying that every knee would bow to *God*, Paul was quoting from Isaiah 45:23, “I [Jehovah] have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” Philippians 2:8-11 speaks of all bowing the knee to *Jesus*, who “humbled himself, and became obedient unto ... the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Both statements are true, for sometimes this Scripture and others that are similar are properly applied to the Kingdom Age, and at other times, the same principle refers to the Gospel Age. The Isaiah text applies to both ages and even before the Gospel Age. There is a certain degree of judgment in various ages depending on the circumstance and the individuals.

It is important to realize that the New Testament clause “as it is written” indicates a paraphrase of the Old Testament Scripture. The quote often gives the *principle* that is enunciated in the Old Testament and is, therefore, not meant to be an exact translation.

Psalm 45:5 pertains to the heart conviction of mankind in the Kingdom Age with regard to the truth that Jesus is Messiah. “Thine [Jesus’] arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s [God’s] enemies; whereby the people fall under thee [Jesus].” God’s enemies will fall and prostrate themselves before Jesus as they acquiesce and repent, or else they will die.

Incidentally, two tribes are omitted from the listing in Revelation 7:4-8, indicating they

represent classes that will not be in the Little Flock. There Dan pictures the hardened Second Death class, and Ephraim represents the gentler Great Company class.

Rom. 14:12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

While other Scriptures tell us there are times we should judge, verses 10-12 show how careful we must be, for we in turn will be judged. For example, if one is a sponger, going from place to place, we are not to receive him and allow him to stay with us (2 Thess. 3:6-10). Paul advised the brethren, especially elders, to warn those who are unruly or who refuse to work (1 Thess. 5:14; Titus 1:10,11). However, the type of judgment referred to in verses 10-12 is judging whether or not one is in the body, the spiritual family. The view of the nominal Church is that no matter how much one preaches Christ, if he is viewed as being in a cult, he is not a Christian. That type of judgment is condemned in Scripture unless we know an individual has committed the sin unto death, which must be defined very carefully (1 John 5:16). A sin unto death is very serious, and it is usually manifested by the mouth of the person. As Jesus said, we can usually tell a tree by its fruit and water by its sweetness or bitterness.

Rom. 14:13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

The subject matter of chapter 14 is about meat, drink, and the observance of days, and it should be considered in that light, whereas other Scriptures are to be considered in another light. The point is that Scriptures on judging have to be studied in context. Paul was not saying these subjects are unimportant but that conscience is important and should be edified, not destroyed. Principle is not to be compromised.

“What church do you attend?” we are asked. Others want to categorize us, and our answer troubles them. We have Jesus as our Master, and we follow the Bible as God's Word. Just as we do not want to be categorized, so we must be careful not to categorize brethren with questions such as “Does he believe this doctrine?” and “Does he believe that doctrine?” With regard to fellowship, we are not to judge and consider one below us. We must not make a heart judgment as to where one stands with God. Of course there can be differences on nonessential doctrines, but it is permissible to desire one as a teacher if he believes certain doctrines. A brother might not understand a matter in one area but be very advanced in other areas. Hence we should not arbitrarily call one a “babe.” We are to esteem one better than ourselves and look for his good points (Phil. 2:3).

Paul warned that “no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.” To not stumble another Christian is a heavy responsibility. “Stumbling” a brother is to cause him to err in the Christian way and in his service to God, thus adversely affecting and/or damaging his consecration. The Second Death class, as represented by the tribe of Dan, particularly tampers with major doctrine(s) and principle(s). The prophecy of Genesis 49:17 reads, “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.” The horse's hooves represent a Christian's walk in life.

Rom. 14:14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Paul once said, “I am a Pharisee of the Pharisees,” yet here he said, “I ... am persuaded by the Lord Jesus” (Acts 23:6 paraphrase). This strong statement shows that he clearly grasped the change in dispensation, but why did he say that nothing is unclean for the Christian to eat? There are several reasons, as follows:

1. He recalled Peter's dream of clean and unclean animals being together in a sheet, signifying that the Gentiles were to hear the gospel.
2. When Peter was eating with Gentiles but left abruptly, being ashamed when Jews walked in, Paul rebuked him.
3. Jesus said that what goes into the mouth is not as important as what comes out of the mouth.
4. Jesus also said that those who drink his blood have eternal life, showing the blood was not unclean (John 6:54).

However, if someone's conscience thinks that eating certain foods is wrong, he should obey his conscience. Our conscience needs to be educated but should never be disobeyed.

Sometimes we should not question something too deeply, or we will end up trying to obey our conscience and, in so doing, violate a law and be thrown in prison. For example, Paul advised the Corinthian brethren not to question if meat for sale in the public marketplace had been offered to idols, but if someone pointed out that it had been and would not eat for that reason, the Christian was not to eat either, even though nothing was wrong with the meat. Another example is not to question how much of our taxes go to support a war, but if there is a specific tax for war only, the Christian should not pay it.

The criterion for our actions is that if by our doing something, another brother who might walk in would be offended in his conscience, we should refrain from the act. Normally we would do things (such as eating) and not question, but we are responsible for the knowledge that is brought to our attention.

Rom. 14:15 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

The Revised Standard reads, "If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died." Consider the following example. Formerly, Catholics had to abstain from meat and eat fish on Fridays. If one felt that way and we invited him as a guest for dinner on a Friday, we would know that meat is all right to eat, but out of deference to him and his conscience, the loving thing to do would be to serve fish. However, if we were eating dinner on a Friday, and a Catholic barged in and saw us partaking of meat and was horrified, we should not be embarrassed. To be embarrassed would indicate that our actions were wrong when actually we should say, "The Bible does not prohibit eating meat on Friday." We should not let others predicate what we do. Where is the dividing line? That is a delicate balance.

Rom. 14:16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

By this statement, Paul showed that he knew the meat was good to eat, but the Christian must be careful not to defile the conscience of another. Stated another way, we are to act out of love for our brother.

Rom. 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

The subject of what we eat and drink applies to both Jew and Gentile. The Gentiles' problem was that they were accustomed to eating everything including pork, which was plentiful back

there. Even in Jesus' day, there were swine herds in Israel because of the occupation by Roman legions and Gentiles, who were particularly stationed at Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee.

Rom. 14:18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Rom. 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Rom. 14:20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

“All things indeed are pure” is a broad statement. In other words, not all things were pure under the Law, for only clean animals could be eaten. However, the dietary prohibitions of the Law were not pertinent for the Christian except where conscience was involved. Otherwise, Christians could eat pork and meat that had been offered to Jupiter or another god.

Rom. 14:21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

In reading these Scriptures, some feel Paul was saying a Christian should be a teetotaler, but that is not the thought. It sounds as if he was advocating, “If someone would be stumbled by your drinking wine, make a vow to never drink wine lest you offend.” However, he was saying, “In the company of other Christians, do not deliberately drink wine. Do not be careless and fail to watch your behavior. To regard the conscience of others, avoid wine.” But if we are in our own home and take a glass of wine for medicinal purposes, we should not hide the wine if others walk in unexpectedly. To dissemble shows a weakness of faith on our part.

Rom. 14:22 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

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

The word “damned” is too strong. The thought is that there is a measure of condemnation. “And he that doubteth [that is unsettled as to what is right or wrong in any matter] is *condemned* [in the Lord's sight and also his own] if he eat, because he eateth not of faith [not on account of the newly received faith that sets him free from the Law]: for whatsoever is not of faith [and thus is done *contrary to conscience*] is sin.” Doubting occasions do occur in life's experience whether we realize it or not. If the unsettled condition *persists* and the individual *continues* to eat, he becomes alienated from the Lord, and such alienation, if persisted in, might ultimately lead to final and complete condemnation, namely, Second Death.

Verses 17-23 are very important. We are not to eat or drink anything that will stumble our brother. In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul was not advocating vegetarianism or abstention from wine, but *under certain circumstances*, we should not eat meat or drink wine. What we might not do publicly, we could do in our own home, generally speaking. Jesus both ate meat and drank wine. Of course we should not serve wine in the presence of an alcoholic. The point is to watch our conduct where possible. We should not eat or drink in a *public* area where to do so might be misunderstood. To have our faith to ourself before God (verse 22) means that *privately* we may eat meat or drink wine.

With the gospel dispensation being a new way in Paul's day, the confusion with the Law was a

strong problem. Hence part of the advice at the council at Jerusalem was not to eat blood or meat dedicated to idols (Acts 15:20). A class should not be torn asunder by doing something that offends a brother. However, if we ask too many questions and are supersensitive, we will have trouble living. There are enough problems in the Christian life without making more unnecessarily.

Any violation of conscience is wrong. “Let not then your good be evil spoken of” means to consider the conscience of others (verse 16). A series of circumstances follow. We should not drink wine if by doing so, others would be offended. For *medicinal* purposes, stronger alcohol is permissible *privately*. If we lived in a Mennonite area, for example, we should observe Sunday as a holy day. Sisters should wear dresses (or skirts) to Sunday meetings. Under the Law, a woman had to avoid man’s clothing and vice versa. For activities such as gardening and hiking, slacks are acceptable.

Moderation and modesty are the rule. A woman should not appear like a man. Each individual must draw his or her own line where masculinity and femininity belong. Style does have some influence, but we are not to be guided by the world. Especially for the Memorial, we should wear modest clothing. The point is not to concentrate on our clothing or call attention to self. Sometimes it is necessary to forego certain liberties.

Rom. 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Comment: For “infirmities,” the Revised Standard has “failings.” Those who are strong mentally, physically, and spiritually in faith and in the understanding of Scripture—those whose consciences are educated by Holy Writ—ought to bear with the failings of the weak, who are under self-imposed bondage. Mature Christians, as opposed to babes, should not insist on having their own way when principle is not involved. Those who are stronger in faith in the subjects previously discussed (diet and observing holy days) ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. This principle applies in other areas as well.

Some apply verse 1 as follows. They gear the meetings to newcomers by repeatedly studying the *First Volume*. They feel it is selfish to desire deeper truths and that we should sacrifice for newcomers. To follow this policy exclusively is wrong. The studies should be for the development of the entire class. *Both* newcomers and those longer in the way should be fed.

Romans 14:1 said to receive one who is weak in faith “but not to doubtful disputations.” In regard to those who still tried to observe parts of the Law, Paul’s advice was not to force them to comply but to be charitable to their bondage. The more mature Christians were not to stir up trouble but were to have tolerance for the conscience of the weaker Christians. However, the teaching from the platform should be correct—that we can eat meat, that we do not have to observe the sabbath, etc. Only in ordinary fellowship can we be so charitable and allow differences of opinion, but in teaching, we are to stand fast in our liberty in Christ (Gal. 5:1). Although we should not make issues that scare away newcomers, we are not to compromise on principles of conduct or doctrine. In matters of doctrine, we should weigh how far-reaching the teaching would be.

Rom. 15:2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

Each of us ought to please our neighbor (or brother) when to do so would serve the good purpose of building up his faith. We should not ignore his fault but should kindly urge him to strive against it. Meanwhile, we are to humbly and patiently submit to the discomfort.

We are to please our neighbor for *his* edification, even if our neighbor misunderstands our *good* efforts. For example, Jesus criticized the scribes and Pharisees, and his words were resented. Likewise, in defending God and His Word, we may be resented by our neighbor.

Chapter 14 stressed tolerance for a time but not forever, or we would end up losing our liberty and compromising. *Only for a while* should we treat newcomers so tolerantly with a give-and-take attitude—as long as that tolerance is not a *teaching* from the platform.

Rom. 15:3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

The statement “For even Christ pleased not himself” tells us a lot that is not written. He had a strong character, yet at times he swallowed certain things and took guff instead of rebuking or giving a strong lesson. Jesus always thought twice as to whether the relative importance of what *he* wanted to do would conflict with what *God* wanted him to do. He came not to do his own will but the will of the Father.

Comment: There were times when Jesus desired to share certain truths with his disciples but said, “Ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12).

Reply: Yes, the time was not propitious for informing them. If meat is fed to babies, they might choke and die, and so it is with new Christians. “Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). Deep subjects should not be used when they are not edifying to a group as a whole.

An extreme case where Jesus did not please himself occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane when he said to Peter, “Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11). Previously he had prayed three times, “O my Father, if it be possible [*permissible*], let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). He expressed a thought that was not the Father’s, but then he yielded to his Father’s will. The experience of many of the Lord’s people is that the most severe test comes shortly before their death.

Paul quoted Psalm 69:9, which recorded the prophetic words of Jesus: “For the zeal of thine [God’s] house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee [God] fell on me.” What things reproached God so that the zeal of His house consumed Jesus? Jesus forbade the practices of the money changers and the custom whereby women carrying water took shortcuts through the Temple area. And of course his sermons manifested his zeal.

Verse 3 expresses a touchstone principle. Since even Christ pleased not himself and the reproaches of those who reproached Jehovah fell on him, we should lay down our lives for the brethren. We should go along with their conscience on these lesser issues, even if in so doing, we bring more persecution on ourselves. When Jehovah was misrepresented by the disobedience of others, Jesus *voluntarily and willingly* defended his Father and took the abuse (the reproaches). Hence Jesus did things in *God’s* way by obeying Him and His Word.

Rom. 15:4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

To understand the connection between verses 3 and 4 requires considerable searching of the *circumstance* in which Jesus said that the reproaches against God fell upon him. What Jesus did in manifesting the zeal of God’s house superficially seems to conflict with Paul’s reasoning, but

that is not the case. That subject is a study in itself, which we cannot go into at this time, but the *Diaglott* helps by saying “*the hope*”: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have [the] hope [of the high calling].” Without the article, hope is simply an expression of a circumstance or condition of the heart or mind, and is not necessarily *the hope*. Paul was saying, “If we want to make our calling and election sure, we have to be discriminating in our judgments and behavior.” While Jesus lost his temper in overturning the tables, he did not do any violence to the money changers. He had a whip in his hand, but he did not kill anyone with that instrument. His purpose was to stigmatize the money changers. In the confusion that resulted from his zeal, the money went flying. Jesus manifested patience in that he did not lose his head entirely, for he could have done some other things. Thus he manifested disapproval but did not inflict any lasting injury. He clearly showed his displeasure about such activities taking place in the Lord’s house.

Comment: The Temple priests should have forbidden the money changers long ago.

Reply: Yes, the Jewish religion had become commercialized. From a subtle beginning, there were additions little by little until the vine of commercialism became so strong that it could not be broken. A rope starts with little threads that would break, but in time the number of threads makes the rope strong enough to pull an ocean liner.

What was Jesus’ “comfort of the scriptures” at that time? He knew that his Father had said in effect, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay” (see Prov. 19:11; 20:22). Because he was the Son of God, it was natural for him to chase out the money changers, and in this case, he acted much like Moses, who broke the two tablets of the Law because the Israelites were worshipping the golden calf. Moses then ground the gold, mixed it with water, and made the people drink the powdered remains of the idol. They did not die from the mixture, but they suffered intestinal distress. Thus Moses was patient in that he did not kill the people out of righteous indignation.

Comment: Paul was saying, “Whatever was written in the past was written for the Church’s instruction so that, through patient endurance and steadfastness, and by the encouragement of the Scriptures, Christians might hold fast to their hope of the high calling.”

Reply: Whatever has been written in the New and Old Testaments is for *our instruction*. There are two types of patience: cheerful endurance and long-suffering. Jesus was patient with the disciples so that they would not get discouraged, and he told them of God’s *mercy*. Therefore, to help one another, we should not be hypercritical, always dwelling on thorny doctrines and issues where principle is not especially involved. Just as we sin and ask God for forgiveness again and again, so we must forgive those who ask us for forgiveness.

Rom. 15:5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

In other words, may the God of encouragement and steadfastness, with whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning, grant that we be of one mind in accord with Christ Jesus (James 1:17). May He grant us the same disposition toward one another so that we can live in harmony according to the *example* of Jesus.

Jehovah is a God of steadfastness and encouragement. We are under grace and do not merit His condescending love. Consistently exercising consideration for us, He is steadfast in His concern for our welfare and stands ready to bless us for all the years of our consecration. Incidentally, sometimes the *blunt* brethren are our best friends, for they are more reliable and consistent. Those who are too “sweet” can lack backbone.

Rom. 15:6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The purpose is that together, unitedly, we may with *one voice* “glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul repeatedly emphasized the primacy of God in this epistle.

Rom. 15:7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

Verse 7 is a summation. If we receive each other as Christ received us, we will be promoting the glory of God. In other words, we should try to manifest the same disposition toward the brethren that Christ manifested toward us. We should reflect on this good, practical lesson.

Only God’s Word can teach us where to be lenient and where to be strict with our brethren. If an individual has been a long time in the way, we do not have to be as careful in what we discuss with him, for there should have been growth and character development over the years. We need to be more careful and considerate in our initial fellowship with newcomers.

If God is the God of patience, comfort, and mercy, then He is pleased as we endeavor to obey Him. Moreover, our obedience honors Him. The Church is God’s workmanship. Hence if spectators see us trying to copy God in our lives, then to that extent, we are honoring Him—in words and in deeds. Jews and Gentiles should realize that both were called, and they should be understanding of each other, thereby honoring God with *one voice*.

Principles should be kept in their context. Otherwise, they can be misapplied. When we obey the Lord’s Word, we are pleasing God, not ourselves—no matter what the repercussions! Principles should not be compromised.

Rom. 15:8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:

Jesus “was a minister of the circumcision [the nation of Israel] for [on behalf of] the truth of God, to confirm the promises [the Abrahamic Covenant] made unto the fathers [the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob].” Jesus went to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). He concentrated his energies on the homeland, and even when he went to Tyre and Sidon in Lebanon, there were Jews to whom he preached. Evidently, that trip was made for just *one Jew* in Lebanon who was to be called.

Paul was made a minister to both Jews and Gentiles, but he focused mostly on the latter. Nevertheless, in traveling to leading Gentile cities, he first went to the synagogue. When the Jews would hear him no longer, he either preached to the Gentiles in that city or went on to another city as the door of opportunity opened.

Earlier in this epistle, Paul considered all points of view of the Jews versus the Gentiles and vice versa. However, another problem in the change from the Jewish dispensation is that Jesus had not preached to the Gentiles during his earthly ministry. Now Paul anticipated the thinking of the Gentiles, whose question would be, “Why not?” Jesus was the minister of the circumcision in order to confirm the Abrahamic promise made to the fathers. By preaching to Israel, he *first* gave the privilege of becoming sons of God to the right-hearted among the Jews.

Rom. 15:9 And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

Verses 9-12 are a separate thought, in which Paul quoted from four different places in Scripture to show that Jesus' message would subsequently go to the Gentiles. Of course the Gentiles did not "glorify God for his mercy" until after the conversion of Cornelius, which opened the door for the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-4).

Although not an exact quote, verse 9 was taken from Psalm 18:49, "Therefore will I give [profess or confess audibly] thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name." The word "heathen" means "peoples," that is, people other than Israel, hence Gentiles, or nations. The thanks and the praises are given outwardly, and so is the singing.

In writing these things, David spoke prophetically for Jesus. Verse 44 of the Psalm reads, "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers [the Gentiles] shall submit themselves unto me."

Paul quoted only a small part of Psalm 18 because he assumed the right-hearted Jews were familiar with it, for they *loved and knew* God's Word—and so should we! Then the individual had to *reason* on verse 49, which shows that God purposed to bless the Gentiles with truth.

The pronoun "I" refers to Jesus, the "minister of the circumcision," the speaker. During his earthly ministry, he spoke only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but after his resurrection, he told his disciples to go out and preach to the Gentiles (Acts 1:8). "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the [Gentiles in the] uttermost part of the earth [eventually]."

Comment: Jesus said, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

Reply: Yes. He spoke similarly in John 17:20,21, "Neither pray I for these [disciples] alone, but for them also [Jews and Gentiles] which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

Rom. 15:10 And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

Verse 10 is a quote from the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:43, "Rejoice, O ye nations [Gentiles], with his people [the Jews]: for he [God] will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people." Moses was speaking about the future.

Rom. 15:11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him all ye people.

Verse 11 is a quote from Psalm 117:1, "O praise the LORD [Jehovah], all ye nations: praise him, all ye people." The setting of this Psalm is at the end of the Millennium. The next verse in the Psalm, which reads in part, "The truth of the LORD *endureth* for ever," verifies Romans 15:8 in regard to Jesus' being a minister to the Jews "for the *truth* of God."

Rom. 15:12 And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

Verse 12 is a quote from Isaiah 11:10, "And in that day there shall be a root [shoot] of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." Paul was tying in the "ensign" with the reign, the time when Michael will stand up

for his people Israel, stopping the trouble in Israel and the anarchy in the world. Then shall the banner, or ensign, be raised up, and Jehovah will be recognized as the God *of Israel*. The banner will be like saying, “Look and see where God is exercising His authority.” It will be like a military ensign, for Jehovah will “go forth, and fight against those nations [who come down from the north against Israel], as when he [formerly] fought in the day of battle” (Zech. 14:3). Then shall this banner be lifted.

Paul purposely quoted only a fragment of Isaiah 11:10 in order to hide the truth from those who do not want to reason and search it out. In this age of *faith*, the gospel is not to be that plain. Truth will be made plain later, in the Kingdom Age.

What was Paul’s purpose in verses 9-12? By using these quotes from the Old Testament, he showed that the gospel was to go to the Gentiles. These texts prophesied that the Messiah, whoever he was and whenever he came, would eventually be recognized by the Gentiles.

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

Paul was saying, “Now the God of [the] hope [of the high calling to both Jews and Gentiles] fill you with all joy and peace in believing, [so] that ye may abound in [that] hope, *through the power of the Holy Spirit*.” Faith is most essential, for it leads to hope and having the love of God. With the Jews having been told by God through the Prophet Amos, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth,” a prejudicial climate against the Gentiles existed in their culture (Amos 3:2). Paul desired that the *power of God’s Spirit* might penetrate that prejudice.

Notice Paul’s references to God in this chapter:

“Now the God of patience and consolation” (verse 5)

“Now the God of hope” (verse 13)

“Now the God of peace” (verse 33)

Rom. 15:14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

Paul was encouraging the brethren in Rome, who, being an established class and not new converts, had a sufficiency of knowledge to be able to “admonish one another.” Evidently, they had diligently applied themselves in the study and meditation of the portion of God’s Word that was available to them. Thus they had head knowledge, but they were in need of certain instruction because their prejudice was a barrier along the lines of the Law.

Comment: By saying, “Ye also are full of *goodness*,” Paul apparently felt their heart condition was right. While he wanted to straighten them out, he gave them credit for trying to do what was right.

Reply: Yes, Paul commended the brethren wherever he could. He felt they had the knowledge to instruct and admonish.

“I am persuaded” was a characteristic expression of Paul, just as Jesus used “*verily, verily*” (meaning “*truthfully*”) as an emphatic expression (Rom. 8:38; 14:14; 2 Tim. 1:5,12).

Where did the Roman brethren get their “knowledge”? At the Feast of Pentecost, the 3,000 and 5,000 Jews who were converted in Israel returned home with beginning knowledge (Acts 2:41; 4:4). Peter probably fed them with additional knowledge, and tradition says that the Apostle James traveled widely, even to Spain and very likely also to Rome. Hence the Romans received

instruction from brethren other than Paul.

Peter was given the keys to both the Jewish Church and the Gentile Church; that is, he was given the honor of opening the door of the gospel message to both Jews and Gentiles. At Pentecost, he spoke only to Jews, but later he spoke to Cornelius, the first Gentile. Therefore, Peter fed both Gentile and Jewish Christians. Following his resurrection, Jesus commissioned Peter to feed his “lambs” (babes) and his “sheep” (more mature Christians) (John 21:15-17).

Rom. 15:15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God,

“I have written the more boldly unto you.” Paul’s words were not empty (compare Ephesians 6:19,20). Throughout this epistle, Paul took the liberty of speaking quite bluntly. In order to help the brethren in Rome as an instructor, he took advantage not only of his being an apostle but also of his background and the ministry that had been given to him. The brethren would have understood his motivation based on his great familiarity with Scripture, his earnestness, and his reputation of being persecuted for righteousness’ sake.

Rom. 15:16 That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

Paul again directed his writing to the Gentile Christians. Through the grace of God, the message of salvation and the wonderful opportunity of the high calling had been made available to them. As a minister of Jesus Christ, he felt responsible for seeing that this good news was presented to the Gentiles, who previously were ignorant and outside the circle of God’s special care.

As commissioned through Ananias, Paul was the minister of Jesus to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Apollos, who was learned in Greek, showed the Jews that Christ was Messiah, and he also preached to the Gentiles. But when Gentile converts came into the Roman church, the Jewish Christians said the Law had to be obeyed. Paul straightened out this thinking in his letters and actually said in his Epistle to the Romans that the Jews were weaker in their faith by adhering to requirements of the Law such as not eating meat, observing holy days, and circumcision. Paul forbade Titus, a *Greek*, to be circumcised because the ritual would be misunderstood, but on another occasion, he advised Timothy to be circumcised so that he could move freely among the Jews. Thus the nature of the advice depends on the *circumstances and the reason*.

Gentiles needed the knowledge that the stand they took as Christians was correct. Therefore, Paul reassured them and removed their confusion. The principle is the same with us—it is hard to serve God zealously if we are confused as to where we stand with Him, that is, as to whether or not our consecration was accepted.

Rom. 15:17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

Here was proper self-laudation. Paul called attention to his credentials. The Revised Standard reads, “In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.” Paul’s words, logic, deeds, and sufferings for Christ all wrought conviction to those who saw him, even though his physical appearance and voice did not comport with his stature as being the chief of the apostles. What, then, is the principle here? Paul’s *power*, his *commission* to speak to the Gentiles, and his *faithful life* to date were all proofs of his apostleship. Just being eloquent is not enough reason to believe someone. One must have “credentials” and a life of faithfulness.

Paul's glorying was not an indication of pride. It was necessary for his contemporaries to be reminded of who he was. Jesus did the same in saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am [I existed]" (John 8:58). Jesus had come from God. The lesson is that when issues are involved, we should lay them on the table and not just be a smooth talker.

Rom. 15:18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

Paul expressed himself with honesty, for he did not speak of things that Christ had not wrought through him; that is, he was telling the truth as it really was, and he would be afraid to do otherwise. Those who witnessed his earnestness and personal conviction realized he had experienced a remarkable conversion. His logic, his reasoning ability, and his constant calling attention to God's Word were apparent to all. Like Jesus, he declared "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

Rom. 15:19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

"I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." Paul did not preach just to get initial conversions, but he preached the gospel *in depth*. We should remember that principle in our ecclesia arrangement.

Paul went into lands where the gospel had not yet been preached, going as far as Illyricum, the region of Kosovo in southern Yugoslavia today. After going through Macedonia, he made a brief excursion to Illyricum, which was off the beaten path, but probably the Lord wanted the gospel to go to one or two individuals there. He had great zeal to go out "cold" into new areas.

From Jerusalem up to the area of Illyricum, Paul had fully preached the gospel of Christ. When he preached in person, we can be sure that he spoke for hours, just as he did at Troas when the young man fell down from the third loft (Acts 20:6-12).

Rom. 15:20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

"Lest I should build upon another man's foundation." Generally speaking, Paul did not want to interfere with "another man's" work. (The exception was when an ecclesia went out on a tangent and needed correction.) Paul realized that he had a strong character and personality with superior qualities, and therefore, out of love, he did not want to usurp the work of others and thereby discourage them.

Paul's attitude was proper Christian decorum. He was talking about a foundation laid by another *apostle*, not just the preaching of other brethren. With Rome being the center of the empire at that time, others not only from Jerusalem but also from Asia Minor and other places traveled there.

The apostles spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, so if Paul had preached upon that "foundation," the teachings would not have contradicted. Nevertheless, he felt that if God directed another apostle into a particular region, he should not interfere with that providence. However, after Paul went into virgin territory and founded classes, others built upon his work. For example, the Apostle John went to Ephesus and resided there, having a ministry in that city for a considerable number of years. Paul felt that by going to new areas, he could speak openly and bluntly as he was moved, giving those with a hearing ear a good, solid foundation that

would last. He was not interested in sweet talk. Many talks that we hear at conventions are good for the moment and serve their purpose, but they do not endure for any length of time. Paul wanted to preach *substance* and call things as *they really were*—and thus be helpful.

Rom. 15:21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

Paul took a principle from Isaiah 52:15, “So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.” Not only had Jesus “not [been] spoken of” to Gentiles in some of these regions, but even the Jews did not know about the gospel.

Rom. 15:22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

In wanting to go to Rome, Paul was “much hindered” by Satan. In addition, some of Paul’s Jewish enemies followed him and even tried to precede him to a city to prevent a good reception. People like news, and thus, without interference from his enemies, who prejudiced the minds of the populace, Paul would have been welcomed as a newcomer, generally speaking. The inhabitants would have received him with an open mind. Where Paul could, he used guile in a good sense to win people to the Lord. On another occasion, he was “hindered” by sickness. Thus a number of factors prevented his going to Rome earlier.

Such previous hinderings may be the reason Paul used his Roman citizenship to get to Rome late in his ministry. He was captured by the Roman guard in Caesarea, and the Jews wanted to put him to death. However, a child came and told that the Jews were planning to ambush and kill the Roman guard to get at Paul. By declaring his Roman citizenship and using it as a wedge, Paul had a right to be tried in Rome. Thus, even though he might die and his ministry be abruptly terminated, he used this strategy to get safe conduct to Rome. Subsequently, when he was under house arrest in Rome, the Lord prospered his preaching, so that even some of Caesar’s household became converts. Paul was always alert for opportunities and the Lord’s leadings.

Rom. 15:23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

Paul had thoroughly covered the territory and established ecclesias, so now he hoped to go to Rome. For years, Paul had had that desire, but first, he had to do work elsewhere. As stated in verse 21, he had to preach where Christ had not yet been preached.

The expression “these many years” proves Paul wrote this epistle late in his ministry. Letters were written on goatskin in those days.

Rom. 15:24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

Paul purposed to go to Spain. Between his first imprisonment and the second imprisonment, when he was decapitated, tradition says that he went to Spain. Here Paul said, “In going to Spain, I hope to stop and see you on the way and then be sped on my journey by you.” He hoped the Roman brethren would set up a schedule for him so that he could see the maximum number of brethren in a short time and then get on to Spain. As Paul expressed it, he wanted to be “somewhat filled” with the company of their company; that is, he wanted to have the fellowship of the Roman brethren.

While there is no record to prove absolutely that Paul went to Spain, it seems that when he was released from his first imprisonment in Rome, he made a hurried trip to Spain. Some feel he even went to England, but we do not think that is the case. However, the evidence is quite strong that some who were converted by Jesus' ministry, particularly Joseph of Arimathea, did go to England. Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy and very influential man.

Rom. 15:25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

Rom. 15:26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

Rom. 15:27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

The brethren at Macedonia and Achaia gave Paul money for the poor Christians at Jerusalem. Paul's message to the Corinthians provides more information about this collection for those who were suffering from the predicted famine in Jerusalem.

Comment: What a lovely spirit for the Gentiles to be "pleased" to contribute to the temporal needs of those brethren!

Rom. 15:28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

"When therefore I ... have sealed [delivered] to them [the poor saints in Jerusalem] this fruit [love gift, or donation], I will come by you into Spain." When Paul had delivered the money to the brethren at Jerusalem, he intended to go to Spain via Rome.

If at all possible, a promise or service should be fulfilled. Wishful thinking is not sufficient if the actual deed is possible. Every act we perform is literally recorded in heaven as a completed deed.

Rom. 15:29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

Paul's desire was that he be permitted to go to Rome "in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." Agabus predicted that bonds awaited Paul in Jerusalem. "There came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (Acts 21:10,11). Paul's prayer was answered in the affirmative—he did get to Rome but as a prisoner. Placed under house arrest, he had considerable liberty. Eventually he was released and went to Spain. When Paul returned, he was apprehended by Nero.

Rom. 15:30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

Rom. 15:31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;

Paul solicited the prayers of the Roman brethren for his trip to Jerusalem, which was a real

“hornet’s nest” of persecution. He was saying, “Pray for me that if permissible, I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea.” Paul was delivered but not in the way that would normally be expected. He was delivered as a prisoner.

In addition, he asked for prayers that the service “which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints [who are there].” Because of prejudice, he had some doubts as to whether the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem would accept money from Gentile Christians.

Rom. 15:32 That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

Rom. 15:33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

After finishing his main address to the Roman brethren, Paul added these personal notes.

Rom. 16:1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea;

The Greek indicates that Phebe was a deaconess in the ecclesia of Cenchrea (see the RSV). She may have been the treasurer or had some other office. Cenchrea was a coastal village, a port town in Corinth, Greece, and evidently the residence of this sister.

Rom. 16:2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

Verse 2 suggests that Phebe was a woman of some means who entertained pilgrims and helped brethren financially. Paul not only endorsed her but asked the brethren in Rome to assist her in her need in the “business” she had to perform. Perhaps she had property or investments to take care of in Italy, and being older and a widow, she would have certain problems. Lydia of Thyatira is another example of a wealthy widow, a sister in Christ, who extended hospitality to the brethren.

In those days, sisters who were more elderly widows and financially able to be of service to the Church were deaconesses. Therefore, it is thought by some that Phebe was a widow of later years and financially capable of performing service for the brethren. Travel was rigorous, and after a long trip, brethren stayed a while and were given hospitality, which deaconesses could provide. Currently, there is little need for deaconesses along that line, for conditions are different. Meeting halls are rented, brethren have personal automobiles, and travel does not involve weeks or months of time. Those who travel to meet brethren or to serve or attend a convention usually return home in a day or two. Therefore, there is not the same need for deaconesses today. However, if such a need arose, or if a sister provided a study for new interests, separate from the ecclesia, it would be appropriate for the class to honor her as a deaconess. Not only should such a sister have stability of character, but she should have been consecrated for a considerable time and have performed services for the Lord.

The Pastor had a service for sisters that was a kind of pastoral work in which they were not teaching in the Church but could help beginners on the side. Of course brothers who are not elders have that liberty too. It is to the credit of an ecclesia if the members formally honor an individual who is doing that kind of work on the side, which he or she is entitled to do. To not formalize the honor indicates a narrowness of perspective.

Comment: Sr. Lundquist is an example of such a sister earlier in the Harvest period.

Reply: Yes, and she was not endorsed by the brethren at large. Along another line, Philip the evangelist had four daughters who prophesied through the power of the Holy Spirit in the days of the apostles (Acts 21:8,9). As prophetesses, they spoke mechanically.

Rom. 16:3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

Rom. 16:4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

The fact that Priscilla and Aquila were now in Rome shows this epistle was written later in Paul's life. Originally, they were from Rome. They subsequently lived in Corinth and then in Ephesus, but when they were banished from Ephesus by a Roman ruler and had to leave their tent-making occupation for a while, they returned to Rome. At an earlier time, Priscilla and Aquila had risked their lives on behalf of the Apostle Paul.

Paul listed many brethren in this epistle—at least 26 by name—and referred to a number of others who are unnamed. Thus there could easily have been 50 brethren in the church at Rome. Presumably there were more brethren in the Roman ecclesia at this time than in any other city in the Roman Empire. In reading all these names, we can assume that Paul had some knowledge about each individual. Otherwise, he could not have greeted them in a personalized sense. Probably he had gotten the information about the class in Rome from Aquila and Priscilla because they were his helpers and had “laid down their own necks” for him on one occasion. Many of the names were Roman, a few were Jewish, and a couple were Greek. As discussed previously, the start of the class at Rome could not have been earlier than the Day of Pentecost. From AD 33 to 60, a period of 27 years, the ecclesia had prospered.

Rom. 16:5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epäenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.

Paul sent greetings to the class that met in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. Epäenetus was a zealous brother, a convert, who resided in Rome. Achaia was a province in northern Greece, but other translations, including the *Diaglott*, have “Asia” instead of “Achaia.”

Rom. 16:6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.

We do not know who this “Mary” was. Probably she was not any of the Marys who are mentioned in the Gospels. At any rate, this mysterious Mary had “bestowed much labour” on Paul and those associated with him at the time.

The name Mary appeared very early in history but was Jewish as a rule, based on Miriam. As the Church grew in influence, children were named John, Mary, etc., after Bible characters.

Rom. 16:7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Andronicus and Junia, Paul's kinsmen and fellow prisoners—old-timers in the truth—were known among the apostles. They had accepted Jesus as the Messiah prior to Paul's conversion. Here is a clue that some in Rome had become converts at Pentecost, AD 33.

Rom. 16:8 Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

Paul continued to name brethren who were to be greeted. For Amplias to be Paul's “beloved in

the Lord” means there was a previous association between them. Of the named brethren, some had personally met Paul, some had corresponded with him, and some had an association through other brethren who brought their good wishes to him and perhaps even a donation to help in the work. Still other brethren were noteworthy, so Aquila and Priscilla may have mentioned their names. In summary, then, the named brethren were known to Paul either by personal contact, correspondence, or word of mouth.

Rom. 16:9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

Here were two more brethren personally acquainted with Paul: Urbane, his “helper in Christ,” and Stachys, his “beloved.”

Rom. 16:10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus’ household.

Paul commended Apelles as being “approved in Christ.”

Rom. 16:11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

As a “kinsman” of Paul, Herodion was a fellow Jew and perhaps also a relative. Narcissus was the prime minister of Emperor Claudius. Hence one in Caesar’s own household was a Christian. In fact, the entire family of Narcissus had been converted.

Rom. 16:12 Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.

For Paul to know that two sisters named Tryphena and Tryphosa labored in the Lord, he would have received a report. He also sent greetings to the “beloved” Persis, who labored “much” in the Lord.

Rom. 16:13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

Rufus was probably one of the sons of Cyrus, who helped Jesus carry the Cross. Paul also wanted his mother to be greeted. She or other women may have made clothing for Paul—a hat, gloves, sweater, etc. The expression “his mother and mine” shows a tender relationship.

Rom. 16:14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them.

Hermes, a shepherd, and Barnabas wrote epistles that were not included in Holy Writ. Their letters are in the Sinaitic manuscript. It is likely that “the brethren which are with them” were relatives and/or households.

Rom. 16:15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

Some of these names could have been listed because Paul wanted to be discreet; that is, he wanted these individuals to know that when he prayed for the brethren, they were included.

As so many individuals continued to be named, we realize that this addendum to an epistle was most unusual. Chapter 15 ended with “Amen,” so chapter 16 is like a postscript. Paul had already given a benediction and a “so be it”: “Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”

Rom. 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

“Salute one another with an holy kiss.” Paul was saying, “When you Jewish and Gentile Christians meet together, respect one another and make the brethren feel they are all of the family of God. Make the atmosphere right.”

A “holy kiss” meant that men could “touch” other men cheek to cheek, as is still done in Europe today, and women could similarly greet women. It was male to male, and female to female.

Rom. 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

Rom. 16:18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Those who cause divisions “by good words and fair speeches” do so for self-aggrandizement. Hence we should not judge others by their vocabulary. The question is, What is the motive? Is it to honor God and Jesus, or is it for vainglory? Paul admonished the brethren to “mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine” they had learned, “and avoid them.” Otherwise, the naive and gullible brethren—those very trusting—might be deceived. Important decisions in life should not be based on emotion.

In other words, we are to use discretion and limit our extension of fellowship when others are causing sectarian divisions. For example, circumcision and the Law were made a test in the early Church to determine whether one was a Christian. The point is that we do not necessarily have the same degree of fellowship with all brethren. “Offences” are immoralities, including such problems as divorce not on scriptural grounds and remarriage. “Divisions” are usually along doctrinal lines, and “offences” are more along character and moral lines. Examples of offenses, or stumbling blocks, would be unnecessarily making issues of controversial or thorny subjects, especially with newcomers or with brethren in fellowship.

However, we should be concerned if a wrong principle is taught from the platform. To what extent are we to avoid such leaders? We should not vote for them to be elders or speakers on the platform. Also, our facial expressions can express disapproval. We would not necessarily have to leave the ecclesia, but if the issues become so heated continually that spirituality is affected, we may want to leave. We have the liberty in Christ to attend another ecclesia if we would be better fed thereby, but we should avoid a pattern of “bouncing.” The principle of avoidance is in Scripture. We cannot tamper with the Word of God—it must be obeyed!

Spongers, those who eat and do not work, thus taking advantage of hospitality, are also to be avoided. Paul wrote, “If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother” (2 Thess. 3:14,15).

Paul was writing around AD 60, which was 27 years after Pentecost. By that time, some of the Gospels and epistles had been written and circulated. Paul was saying to mark and avoid those who caused divisions and offenses contrary to the teachings the brethren had learned. “For they [those causing the divisions] ... serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly [that is, self in any or all of a variety of ways].” There are different kinds of lusts, gluttony being one example. The desire for fame, leadership recognition, etc., can also be a problem.

“By good words and fair speeches [those who cause divisions and offenses] deceive the hearts of the simple.” In a large class we attended many years ago, brothers who received the most votes as elders were those who never spoke on any controversial subject. Their talks were always general, usually on the fruits or graces of the Holy Spirit, and never on chronology, prophecy, or other important doctrines. Conversely, brothers who stood up for principle and presented deeper subjects were either narrowly elected or not elected. Elders who were elected unanimously, or nearly so, always walked on safe ground, thus deceiving especially the brethren who were not deep students of the Word—either newcomers or those longer in the truth who never advanced. A *worldly* philosophy for winning friends and influencing people is to always say things graciously and to avoid expressing opinions. That way no one knows where the speaker stands, and everyone likes him. However, Paul preached the *whole* counsel of God. As brethren, we should *analyze* what we hear.

To state the principle succinctly, we are to avoid those who serve self and cause division. We should *consider*, *mark out*, and *avoid* them. We must *observe* this class, for they are dangerous to the brotherhood.

What doctrines were wrong? The sectarian spirit is not interested in developing the character of Christians for God and Jesus but strives for contention—the spirit of being “for someone” and “against another.” Nevertheless, the Scriptures show that certain divisions are necessary. Here in verse 17, we are told to avoid (separate from, not give audience to) those who cause divisions. For example, we should not support those who espouse circumcision, features of the Law, etc., as essential to being a Christian. Today this divisive attitude might take the form of making the reign a test of brotherhood, which is a wrong premise for the basis of fellowship. We come into the brotherhood *through Christ*. The point is not to allow another test of fellowship—an arbitrary one—that Christ did not authorize.

Consider Titus 1:10,11, “For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths *must be stopped*, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.” Circumcision was a real issue, and the mouths of those who urged it were to be stopped.

Galatians 2:3-5 reads, “But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” Paul gave advice about circumcision. Titus and Timothy were from Greek and Jewish parents. With Timothy, whose mother was *Jewish*, Paul advised circumcision *in advance* so that the effects of his ministry would not be jeopardized. But Titus, whose mother was *Greek*, was told not to be circumcised. Circumcision is not essential for the Christian. We need to be well versed in Scripture to know how and when to take a stand for principle. There is a fine line between right and wrong on some Scriptures.

Rom. 16:19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

“Your obedience is come abroad unto all men.” What obedience? Earlier in this epistle, Paul commended the church at Rome. For a class to be active and established in the capital of the heathen world was remarkable. Their faithfulness was known abroad, that is, by the other classes. With polytheism being practiced in Rome, the Christian religion clashed with the culture of the Roman citizenry.

Paul summed up his letter. He knew there was a need for advice on fellowship and Christian

living between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the Roman ecclesia. He often used contrast, as here, in his reasoning: Be “wise unto that which is good [and proper], and simple [unwise, guileless] concerning evil.” Stated another way, they were to be “men” in good and “babes” in evil. By being aware of what is good in God’s sight, we become more aware of what is evil.

Hebrews 5:14 is a good cross-reference: “Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Also appropriate is 1 Corinthians 14:20, “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.” Seeing the right principle helps us to also understand the wrong principle.

Rom. 16:20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

“The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” In this epistle, Paul compacted in short, terse verses—almost like a sermon—words that were fraught with meaning, often using a play on words. Notice here a play on peace and destruction. Earlier he instructed Christians to follow after peace as far as conscience permits, both with civil authority and in the brotherhood. Peace should be our message where principle is not involved. An exception is to mark those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine received.

In the present life, we should be known as peaceable, law-abiding people—loving, kind, generous, hospitable, etc.—but there is a time for anger. There is a time when one should delight even in destruction, as shown in Revelation 18:20, which tells the risen saints to “rejoice over her [the great whore, the false religious system], thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged [judged] you on her.” This destruction will be a reason for rejoicing because the system has caused the death of millions of people. The story of history and the persecution of the saints has not really been written except for a few books like *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* and the even larger Mennonite *Book of Martyrs*, which lists the names of those who were put to death, the towns where they lived, and the kind of death they suffered. The history is appalling, but what was secretly done down in the dungeons has not yet been revealed. Thus the written histories relate only to those who were burned at the stake and martyred aboveground, which could be seen by the public. The ungodly things that happened in the dungeons remain to be told in the Kingdom.

This violent persecution was pictured by the blood of all the animals that were slain on Jewish altars—100,000 on certain occasions such as the inauguration of Solomon’s Temple. God wants the world of mankind to understand what the blood represented that was involved with the death of those animals. (Simply stated, the bullock pictured Jesus, and the goat represented the Church.) The smell of death will be perpetuated so that all future peoples, yet to be born, will see, read, and hear this history and the cries and moanings of persecution, thus assuring that never again will there be a need for the permission of evil anywhere in the universe. Future generations will not have to experience persecution because they will see history as it actually happened. The photographic record will be *real*—as if they were actually experiencing it. In contrast, what we currently read in books passes over our head, terrible as it was. The record of the persecutions was meant to be *graphic* so that when it is viewed in the future, mankind will *really know evil*—almost as much as those who literally went through it. As mankind see the persecution, they will *feel* it. The blood, with the smell, is necessary to show what evil has done to the righteous and the good. This lesson is *for eternity*. Thus the temporary experiences of man with evil here on planet Earth will be of everlasting, perpetual benefit.

God’s plan of the permission of evil is the *best plan* that could ever have been conceived, and as a result, there will be a minimum of deaths in the ages to come. Adamic death will cease but

not Second Death, so we foresee perhaps one death in a billion people, with such individuals being exterminated right away. Moreover, a *powerful* lesson is needed for those here on earth who come forth from the tomb in the Kingdom Age. They will have to be obedient to get life, worshipping God in spirit and in truth from the heart.

The “God of *peace*” has been allowing evil, but that is not His character. Once the permission of evil on earth is over, peace will extend millions and millions of light-years into the future—for eternity. Earth’s experience with evil will then seem like nothing in history, like a “watch in the night” (Psa. 90:4). Meanwhile, the lesson has to be *powerful* in order to be *lasting*. The God of peace will give those who have brutalized others an opportunity to come and *kneel* before the individuals they put to death and *beg* for their forgiveness. There will be other stripes as well, but to get life, those who perpetrated violence will have to *thoroughly* reform. Everything that has been done willfully against God’s people, however small, has been recorded and will receive appropriate retribution in either the present life or the future life.

Comment: Paul had a wonderful perspective of time in referring to Satan’s actual demise at the end of the Kingdom Age.

Reply: Yes, “bruise” in this context means “crush,” having the thought of extinction. It is not merely referring to getting a black-and-blue mark.

Comment: As the Isaiah study showed, Satan will be visibly seen down here when he is put to death at the end of the Kingdom Age. “They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?” (Isa. 14:16,17).

Reply: Yes, the Scriptures indicate that Satan will materialize on earth at the end of the Millennium and be destroyed *down here* as an object lesson *to all planes of being* (Ezek. 28:19). This action would also incorporate the idea of Satan’s being crushed under (or below) the feet of the glorified Church.

Comment: God said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15).

Reply: Although more comprehensive, that Genesis text is related to verse 20 here in Romans. Fire will come down from heaven to destroy Satan and all who follow him in going up to the Holy City in Israel at the end of the Kingdom Age for purposes of insurrection (Rev. 20:7-9).

“The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” From the time Paul made this statement until the end of the Kingdom Age, when Satan will be destroyed, is a period of almost 3,000 years. In what way is this time period “short”? The title “God of *peace*” indicates that we should suffer injustices in the present life because vengeance belongs to God—He will repay in due time (Rom. 12:19). Therefore, we are to be long-suffering, patiently waiting for God to take care of matters in His own time and way. As individuals, we might see or experience some injustices and even have a trauma as a result, but if we die at, say, 80 years of age, that is still a short time compared to eternity. Man’s days are full of travail, and those who obey Paul’s advice suffer trouble until they die (Job 14:1). Whether a person is in the tomb for a thousand years or immediately receives his resurrection change at death, there is no consciousness of time in the tomb. Paul’s perspective was very unusual, for he regarded even the long period until the end of the Kingdom Age as a short time.

Paul stated the time element from God's standpoint. Earlier he said, "The night is far spent," using the principle of speed to encourage us in our trials (Rom. 13:12). Since our trials are as *nothing* compared to *eternity*, we should try to be patient, faithful, and wise for good and not magnify issues unnecessarily. If we are faithful unto death, the Lord will change us in due time. Satan will not be bruised until the Church is complete and the Kingdom Age ends.

Paul inserted the thought of Satan's bruising because Rome would be the seat of much persecution a little later, in the Smyrna period. As prophesied by Jesus, many Christians would experience severe persecution from AD 303-313. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days [years]" (Rev. 2:10). The dragon gave its seat to the beast; that is, when the Roman emperor vacated the western capital, Papacy took over Rome (Rev. 13:2). How remarkable that a faithful church would be established in Rome and that later Rome would be the seat of much persecution and the capital of Papacy!

Paul also used the title "God of peace" because he wanted to solve the issue of peace, unity, and conscience between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Hence he wrote in effect, "God bless you in considering this letter. May the peace of God be yours." Satan wanted to disrupt the church at Rome by Judaizing the brethren. He especially wanted to break up the class in his capital, or citadel.

In summary, Satan will be bruised—*destroyed completely*—at the end of the Millennium under the Church's feet. The glorified Church beyond the veil will "bruise" Satan's "head" (Gen. 3:15). The Adversary will be crushed under the Church's *authority*. Paul concluded his statement about Satan's being bruised with the sentiment "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen [So be it]."

Rom. 16:21 **Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.**

Timotheus is Timothy, who came from a mixed Jewish-Gentile marriage. Paul commended both his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, as being mature in the truth (2 Tim. 1:5). Paul called Timothy "my workfellow." He took a special interest in Timothy, perhaps thinking he would take over when Paul died.

Lucius was Luke, not Lucius of Cyrene, Africa (Acts 13:1). Jason was taken hostage when the authorities could not get their hands on Paul (Acts 17:5-10). Sosipater is mentioned as Sopater in Acts 20:4.

Rom. 16:22 **I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.**

Tertius wrote the letter for Paul, serving as stenographer for the dictation. The epistle was apparently written in Greek, which was the language of the day. Latin, the legal language, was used in the courts.

Rom. 16:23 **Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.**

This Gaius was one of the two Paul baptized at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:14). Not only did Gaius host "the whole church," which met in his home in Corinth, but also he extended hospitality to Paul at the time the Epistle to the Romans was written in Cenchrea, about four miles from Corinth.

Erastus was with Paul a long time in Macedonia and Corinth (Acts 19:22; 2 Tim. 4:20). As

“chamberlain,” he was a treasurer of the city and hence a man of means who honored Paul.

Comment: According to Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, a “chamberlain” can be a “house ruler” or “steward.”

Rom. 16:24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Here Paul repeated the words of verse 20, including “Amen.” He was known for his logic, but in addition, the frequent use of “Amen” showed his emotionalism.

Rom. 16:25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

Rom. 16:26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

God has the power to establish us. Paul equated his preaching through the power of the Holy Spirit with that of Jesus. Thus God can establish us through the apostles’ teaching, Jesus’ preaching, and the Law and the prophets *if we obey through faith*. A *life of faith* is the keynote of this epistle—faith! faith! faith!

The “mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” is “Christ in you [both Jew and Gentile], the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). The secret of the calling of Jesus and the Church was a mystery from “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:19,20). God purposed *The Christ, with Jews and Gentiles together*, thousands of years in advance of His revealing it to man. After Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples, this mystery began to open up.

The implication of verse 26 is that some things should be kept secret, for only a fool tells all he knows. “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards [until the time is propitious]” (Prov. 29:11). Some of the secrets in Scripture have a time lock. Thus God keeps secrets, but He gives hints here and there, especially in the Old Testament.

The mystery “now is made manifest ... according to the commandment of the everlasting God, [being] made known to all nations ... [based on] the *obedience* of faith.” In other words, this knowledge is not meant for everybody. One must first come to Jesus and learn of him.

Rom. 16:27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

A paraphrase of verse 27 is, “To the only wise God be praise and glory through Jesus Christ. Amen.” The emphasis should be on God. Paul was enthusiastic as he dictated the message and saw Tertius writing it down. He was happy that this burden on his heart would be in written form. Praise be to the God of peace! Paul’s enthusiasm reveals to us what a wonderful character he was.