

PART ONE: Salvation and Sin's Penalty (Romans Chapter 1-5)

A. The foundation of the gospel

Romans 1:1 - We begin our series on Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome. While God's word is written by people, it is superintended by God (2 Timothy 3:16 cp. 2 Peter 3:16 cp. 2 Peter 1:21). Here Paul is identified as the human author used by God. Paul identifies himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. Christ calls upon all believers to be servants of His (Luke 17:7-10). This means that His will and desires and priorities are to be ours as well. Secondly Paul identifies himself to be called an Apostle. The words "to be" are not in the original and are supplied by the translator. This emphasizes Paul's authority as well as His primary spiritual gift. This reminds us that we each have spiritual gifts or a spiritual gift that identifies us as a part with a specific function in Christ's body, the church. We need to know it and use it. Paul mentions that he is set apart for the gospel of God. God has set us (as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ) apart from the rest of humanity to be a special people who present His message, the gospel, to everyone as we are going (Matthew 28:19 cp. Mark 16:15). It is not our gospel or good news. It is God's. It is a great privilege and responsibility to let people know that there is a message from God concerning His provision for our sinfulness and our lack of acceptable righteousness. Since God has set us apart for this, just as did the Apostle Paul, we need to be sure that we are not setting ourselves apart for anything that would keep us from doing the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5).

Romans 1:2 - Paul continues his discussion of this gospel or good news which was from God and not any other source. He emphasizes that the gospel was promised by God through His prophets in the scriptures of the Old Testament. Moses spoke of the gospel being preached to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 where God stated that: "*All the nations will be blessed in you.*" Paul confirms this in Galatians 3:8. In Isaiah 53:5-6 the death of Christ was clearly predicted as well as in Psalm 22. Peter confirms that David spoke of the resurrection of Christ in Psalm 16:8-11 cp. Acts 2:25-30 and in Psalm 22:19-21 cp. Hebrews 5:7. Isaiah 53:10-12 also speaks of His resurrection. Finally, the fact that this salvation is received by faith apart from works is clearly set forth in Genesis 15:6 cp. Romans 4:3-12 and Habakkuk 2:4 cp. Romans 1:16-17. The fact that God predicted it beforehand adds credibility to the gospel message. As Isaiah 46:10 states God knows the end from the beginning when it comes to the future. For

this reason, we can share the gospel with confidence knowing it is God's remedy for the sin problem.

Romans 1:3-4 –The subject of the gospel or good news from God is Jesus Christ. These two verses deal with His humanity and His deity. As a human being, He was a descendent of King David. This makes Him eligible for the throne of David which He will assume at the time of His return (Luke 1:31-33 cp. Matthew 25:31). His resurrection shows that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. This emphasizes the fact that He is God (John 5:17-18). As God's Son, He possesses the same nature as God. We see clearly that the Holy Spirit and His power were involved in Christ's resurrection. Jesus is different from the other members of the trinity because He is fully man (Hebrews 2:17) and He is different from man because He is fully God (Colossians 2:9). In presenting the gospel, we must present this Jesus to people as the one in which they are to place their undivided faith.

Romans 1:5 - Through whom refers back to the Lord Jesus Christ. It explains that Paul and his associates are not only recipients of God's grace for salvation but for service as well. They also had great spiritual authority and a special place in the body of Christ which is the spiritual gift of apostleship. This grace and their spiritual gift like our spiritual gift is to bring about the obedience of faith among all the non-Jewish people. This does not mean that we do not witness to Jewish people but Paul's apostleship was primarily to the Gentiles, i.e. the non-Jewish people according to Romans 11:13 and Galatians 2:7-9. Even at that Paul's order of operation was to go to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles in most locations (Romans 1:16). He had an obvious heart for his people the Jews (Romans 9:1-3). So our real obedience to what we read here is to bring about the obedience of faith in Christ. This obedience is clearly defined for us in Romans 10:16 (NKJV): *"But they have not all obeyed the gospel. 'For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?"* To obey the gospel is to believe our report, i.e. the message presented in the gospel. The obedience of faith is simply to obey the injunction to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. It is simple faith in Jesus Christ the God/man who died on the cross in our place and was bodily raised from the dead. Notice that Paul says that God's grace and our spiritual gift are to bring people to saving faith among the Gentiles not of the Gentiles. We will not bring most people to Christ according to Matthew 7:13-14. God's purpose is this age does not require or anticipate the conversion of all the

world to Christ but to call out a people for His name (Acts 15:14). Finally, we are doing this for the sake of Christ's reputation and authority, i.e. His name. Our job is to be faithful in this.

Romans 1:6 - The believers who were in Rome were among those Gentile people who were the called of Jesus Christ. The question arises, how are we called and the answer is clearly given in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. *"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (NKJV). Notice that our call is from Jesus Christ through the gospel. God chose us from the beginning for salvation. He did not choose our decision to trust Christ. He chose us. God also chose the means by which this would be received. The means sanctification by the Spirit (probably a reference to His convicting work) and our responsibility to believe the truth of the gospel. Just because God chose us for salvation does not mean that this was a rigged election. If God had made the choice after we believed, no one would have any problem with that. God who knows what choices people are going to make or not make can make that decision in advance unlike people who have to wait and see if others are going to do what they are responsible to do. Sanctification occurs in four phases: pre-sanctification spoken of in 1 Corinthians 7:14; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; positional sanctification which is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; practical sanctification which is mentioned in 1 Peter 1:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:3 ; and perfect sanctification which is mentioned in Ephesians 5:27; 1 John 3:2. Not all people who experience pre-sanctification experience salvation (1 Corinthians 7:14, 16) but all people who experience salvation experience pre-sanctification as well as the other aspects of sanctification by the time Christ returns. We as believers are the called of God, an invitation given by God's grace and received by faith.

Romans 1:7 - Paul finally tells the readers the identity of the people to whom this letter was sent. First we believers are special objects of God's love. Secondly, they are called saints. This is a synonym for one who has trusted Christ. It means a holy or set apart one. Every believer has a perfectly holy standing or position in the sight of God. However, the believers state or practice is constantly under construction. When believers are called saints, the emphasis is on our standing or position before God. We see that the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are coequal in being the

source of grace and peace which shows that they are equal members of the godhead. The grace that Paul desires for these believers is not saving grace because they received that when they trusted Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:1-2). It is the grace by which they live the Christian life appropriated by humility (James 4:6) and prayer (Hebrews 4:16).

Secondly, the peace that is desired for these believers is not peace with God because they received that when they trusted Christ for salvation (Romans 5:1). It is the peace of God which they experience by avoiding worry and praying specifically with thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6-7 and by hearing God's word through Christ and abiding in Christ (John 16:33). We must continually ask ourselves, are we appropriating Christ's grace and peace to experience abundant life or are we falling short because we fail to do so?

Romans 1:8 – Here we see that one of the things for which we are to give thanksgiving is the faith of other believers. This speaks not only of the faith by which they receive salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9) but the faith by which they live the Christian life (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 2:6). We see that our thanksgiving to God is to be for specific things for specific believers. We also are to give thanks for the testimony that the faith of other believers has among the people of the unsaved world and how widespread it is. Finally we see that prayer is to be directed to the Father through Christ, i.e. in His name (John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24).

Romans 1:9-10 - We note that prayer is to be persistent as the word "unceasingly" suggests. The word "always" tells us that he was persistent in praying for other believers and teaches us that we should be too. There was a desire on his part to spend time with these believers. We need to ask ourselves if we desire to spend time with other believers and pray to that end, or if we prefer to avoid spending time with them, to ask ourselves if we really love them. Notice that he subjected this specific request to spend time with these believers to the will of God knowing full well that God might providentially hinder him from spending time with them. God's word lays great emphasis on praying according to God's will (1 John 5:14; Matthew 8:2). People often do not know if we pray and how much we pray and what we pray about. God, however, is the one who sees what we do in this regard and will reward us accordingly (Matthew 6:6). Telling others the gospel, i.e. the good news about how salvation is provided and received, was not just an external matter for Paul – and hopefully for us too - to be checked off of some list. It involved the inner being as a service to

God. This reminds us that we must regularly pray for those who have come to Christ and be diligent to tell unsaved people the good news they desperately need.

Romans 1:11-12 - One of the reasons that we meet together as believers is to give something in the way of spiritual benefit to one another. (The term “spiritual gift” should not be understood as referring to the spiritual gift(s) given to us at salvation according to 1 Corinthians 12:11, 18). The spiritual benefit that is mentioned here is to provide mutual encouragement to one another by each other’s faith. This would include the faith that brought salvation and the faith by which we are living out the Christian life and by which we are handling the difficulties that God allows in order to develop us. This provision of encouragement by our mutual faith is intended to establish or strengthen us spiritually. To be strengthened spiritually is to be more conformed to the image of Christ. One of the things that Paul’s letters destroy is the false concept of “Lone Ranger” Christianity practiced by many who profess to be believers. We need to be involved with one another because that is a very important part of what it means to practice love toward one another.

Romans 1:13-15 – It is important that we let other believers know if we have planned to work among them so that through the connections they have we can present the gospel to those who are unsaved. By fruit, Paul is speaking of those who come to a saving knowledge of Christ by trusting Him as savior. Notice that he uses the word “among” rather than “of”.

Paul’s purpose as well as ours is to present the gospel to unsaved people knowing that most of them will reject the message but those who believe will become part of the people called out from among the Gentiles for God’s name (Acts 15:14). Notice that he had been hindered in carrying out this task. God’s word would show Satan as the one who brings this hindrance (1 Thessalonians 2:18; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Our responsibility is communicating the gospel to all people regardless of social status and regardless of education or intelligence. We must ask ourselves. Are we eager to share the gospel or are we reluctant to do so. God’s word tells where we need to be. With His help and our yieldedness, we can have that ready eagerness.

Romans 1:16 - Why was Paul eager to tell others the gospel and why should we also be eager? The word “for” tells us why we should be eager to tell it to other believers. It is not a message to be ashamed of. In fact

Mark 8:38 would indicate that if one has truly trusted Christ, he will not be ashamed of any aspect of Christ's words which would include the gospel. Even though the gospel is simplistic in the world's eyes, we should never be ashamed of it because it is God's power for salvation from sin's penalty. Romans 2:16 tells us why the gospel is needed because without receiving it and the Lord Jesus Christ, we face a judgment of condemnation. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 tells us what the provision of the gospel is: Christ's death for our sins as a substitute and His bodily resurrection from the dead. Here in Romans 1:16, we are told how that provision is received. It is by faith, nothing more and nothing less. However, in order to believe, one must recognize that they are a sinner deserving of God's full wrath and judgment. It does not involve any ritual, just simple child-like faith. Notice this is for everyone regardless of religious or ethnic background. The condition is the same for everyone. As we tell others about Christ, keep the gospel simple and accurate. As someone said, like fish we catch them (Matthew 4:19) but God cleans them.

Romans 1:17 – Like the preceding verse, this verse is connected to the gospel or good news in verse 1:15. The gospel reveals how one receives the righteousness which God requires in order to enter heaven. We can never produce enough righteousness to satisfy God's righteous standard (Galatians 3:21). God requires perfect righteousness in order to have the eternal life needed to enter heaven. It is not a matter of us coming up short on righteousness and God chipping in and making up the difference. It is realizing that our righteousness is rubbish and filthy rags in God's sight (Philippians 3:4-9; Isaiah 64:6) and trusting Christ as Savior to receive the righteousness that God requires. 100% of the righteousness needed for our salvation is supplied by Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30; Romans 3:21-22) as a gift (Romans 5:17). From beginning to end this righteousness is by faith, whether prior to Abraham (Hebrews 11:7); whether Abraham Genesis 15:6; whether is was a believer under the Old Covenant, i.e. Old Testament (Habakkuk 2:4), or whether it is a Jewish or Gentile believer under the New Covenant (Romans 4:3-5, 22-24). Paul supported his contention by quoting Habakkuk 2:4 from the Old Testament showing his readers that salvation has always been provided by God's grace and received by faith.

B. The witness of creation and human failure (Rom. 1:18-32)

Romans 1:18 - The word “for” connects us back to the third reason given in Rom. 1:15 that Paul and we are to be eager to tell the gospel or good news of how to be saved. God’s wrath is clearly revealed from heaven to those of us who are on earth. Certainly, the scriptures, the curse on creation, the temporal judgments inflicted by God directly or indirectly, the presence of injustice and the presence of sickness and suffering all testify to the fact that God’s wrath keeps on being revealed. Psalm 7:11 says in the NKJV, *“God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.”* This wrath is against not just some of the actions and thoughts that are displeasing to God but all of them. This wrath is also against all not just some of the thoughts and actions that violate God’s standards. In fact the thoughts and actions that fail to meet God’s standards have the effect of suppressing the truth. Because God’s wrath is against all of these, it is important that people understand the seriousness of sin and the consequences of sin. People have two choices. Stay on their present sinful course and experience God’s wrath or receive God’s remedy for this wrath. John the Baptist said it this way in John 3:36 of the NKJV, *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”*

Romans 1:19-20 - These verses explain how God relates to those who have not heard. The creation bears witness to the existence of God. God’s qualities are evident in the creation. The intricacy and complexity of it testifies to His vast knowledge. The fact that He put it into place testifies to His power and might. Man is confronted with the choice to believe in an intelligent designer who has eternally existed or to believe in a universe without any intelligence that somehow just oozed up all this complexity and intricacy so that it sustains itself. The mathematical possibility of evolution is so astronomical that to believe in it requires far more faith than believing the Bible. For example, the formation of just one protein molecule by chance is one out of 1 followed by 243 zeros. Notice that this verse states that God’s invisible qualities have been clearly seen since the beginning. By looking at the design the qualities of the designer are obvious. Because God has clearly shown His reality through the creation, people are without excuse for being in their sin. The knowledge of creation is not enough to save. That requires the gospel. However, the knowledge of creation is enough to condemn. If you think that God should give more opportunity,

you need to partner with God by being involved in either sending missionaries or going as one yourself (Romans 1:14-15).

Romans 1:21-23 - There are 3 levels of knowing God. There is knowing about God and that He exists. This is mentioned here. The second level is knowing God in saving way as in 1 Corinthians 1:21 and John 17:3. This occurs when we trust Christ for salvation. There is the 3rd level of knowing God mentioned in Colossians 1:10 which has to do with a growing relationship where we trust Him more and more. When people know about God and do not properly honor Him nor bother to thank Him, their thinking in regard to God becomes useless or empty. The result is that their thinking becomes darkened to the reality presented in God's word. They would claim that they were wise but in reality they become fools. Fools know the facts about God displayed in the creation but choose to reject those facts in building their concept of God. The exchange the honor and glory of the true God for a god like other people, or even animals and reptiles. People in essence build a god based on their criteria of what god should be like rather than what the true God is like. Polytheism was one of the earliest expressions of this dishonoring of God. Other expressions of this have been the building of a god who does not fit the God of the scriptures. Notice the process: People know about God, then they disregard God, speculate about God, end up with less understanding about God, develop a false wisdom concerning God, exchange this true God for a god of their liking. In short the human race has been evolving downward in its acknowledgement of God.

Romans 1:24-25 - Because people had made substitutes for the real God by false gods or distorting what the true God was like, God gave them over to their sinful ways in the downward sinful evolution of the human race. People soon had the wrong idea as to why God had given them their bodies. Instead of using their bodies to glorify God, they were using them wrongly and indulging them in all kinds of sexual sin. The truth of God and His word was exchanged for what is false. People gave their submission and time of service to what had been created rather than to God the creator. God is the one who deserves our lasting praise. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we called upon to live a life set apart for His purposes and not for self-indulgence (1 Thessalonians 4:7). We are to swim against the tide of a moral cesspool becoming ever so much less than what God intended. Understanding that our bodies are for God and that God is who He reveals Himself to be keeps us from being swept along

by the currents of our present culture. Our focus must be on God the creator and not on what He created. We must stand with the truth of God's word and let it sanctify us (John 17:17) and not exchange it for a lie which originates with Satan the father, i.e. source, of lies (John 8:44).

Romans 1:26-27 – We have seen in Romans 1:19-25 how people have either denied God's reality, substituted false gods for the one true God, or distorted the nature of God. Then God gave them over to sex outside of marriage and an exchange of truth for falsehood. That does not end the downward evolution of people in general. Because people and cultures choose this path, we see in these verses that God gives them over to uncontrolled desires that are described as “degrading”. A specific example is homosexual relationships. God did not design people to have sexual relations with people of their own sex. Unnatural sexual relations would also include such things as bestiality (Lev. 20:15-16). The word “unnatural” is the second word for these type of relationships. Both female and male homosexuality is described in these verses. Such acts are described as “indecent.” Finally, we see that it is described as “error.” One of the consequences in that people living in these sins have is receiving the penalty of their error in the form of sexually transmitted diseases and mental illness. Homosexuals have a higher suicide rate than the general population. The move to fully legitimize these relationships has had a great impact on our culture and our society and not for the better. Even some Bible-believing Christians have been deceived into thinking that some of those who are living in these sins can be saved people and just continue living in them as before (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Just as surely as believers can know they are saved (1 John 5:13) so we can know (same Greek word as 1 John 5:13) – unless we are deceived - that people living in these sins have not yet really trusted Christ for salvation. If homosexuals trust Christ these homosexual activities will be history and not current events in their lives (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Romans 1:28 - Psalm 10:4 states concerning the natural man who is moving away from God, *“The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.”* When God is left out of people's lives, they are given over to a depraved mind. This is a mind which rejects God and His values. God disapproves of this mind and this mind disapproves of God and His ways and thoughts. Then people begin to do those things which are not proper or fitting. This means that these behaviors and thoughts are contrary to the way that God intended us to

think and to live. People are designed to live on the road of God's commandments and when they reject God Himself as He reveals Himself to be, they soon are far off the path that God intended for them. The rest of Romans 1 in vv. 29-32 lists sins that believers are to avoid. Keep in mind that God has listed some very specific sins already mentioned in terms of idolatry, sexual impurity and activity including homosexuality and bestiality. This list of sins are to be avoided as a part of the commandments of Christ which we are to teach one another (Matthew 28:20).

Romans 1:29-32 - In closing out this chapter, I want to discuss each of the forbidden behaviors and thinking patterns. The first of these is all unrighteousness, better understood as all kinds of unrighteousness. 1 John 5:17 tells us that all unrighteousness is sin. Unrighteousness is simply behavior and thought patterns that fail to meet God's standards. It includes not only doing something sinful or evil but a failure to do what is right (James 4:17). Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount went behind the action to point to the motives of people to show that these need to measure up to God's standards (Matthew 6:1-8, 16-18). Jesus also pointed out that sin has its origin in thought patterns that violate God's standards as in Matthew 5:21-22 and 5:27-28. The antidote for being filled with all unrighteousness involves hungering and thirsting for righteousness (Matthew 5:6) and pursuing it (1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22). It results when we as children of light walk as children of light because one part of the fruit of this is all kinds of righteousness (Ephesians 5:8-9).

The terms wickedness and evil describe the result of the downward evolution of man. The generation of Noah's day was described as evil (Genesis 6:5). Jesus stated that believers are basically evil in Matthew 7:11. Jesus referred to the Jewish people living in his day as an evil and an adulterous generation (Matthew 16:4). The scripture stated that people were basically evil in the imaginations of their heart. from the time they were young (Genesis 8:21). Our job as believers is to overcome this evil by doing good according to Romans 12:21. The sins of wickedness and evil are the foundations of the darkness of this world while our good works dispense light into the darkness of this world (Matthew 5:16).

The next sin mentioned is greed. Some of your translations use the word covetousness. We are warned against setting our hearts upon riches when they increase (Psalm 62:10). Greed or covetousness does not involve being rich (cp. Genesis 13:2; Matthew 27:57). Rather, it involves the

desire to be rich. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 warns us against this desire and explains the hurtful consequences that will afflict our lives. This desire is probably as strong in all income levels (observe the number of poor people who buy lottery tickets). 1 Timothy 6:6-8 tells us that part of the antidote for this sin is godliness (=priority of pleasing God) with contentment and to be content if we have food, clothing and shelter (verse 8 should be translated “food and covering” which would include shelter and clothing). 1 Timothy 6:11 gives the rest of the solution to the greed trap. We are to flee it by avoiding behaviors and thought patterns that move us toward basing our life on material things. We are also to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. By obeying God’s word in this matter, we can avoid being caught in the current of the downward evolution of people and showcase the abundant life that God wants each of us to live.

One of the sins that goes with greed is the sin of envy. This can involve someone having a more important role in an organization or at least a more visible one. It can also involve someone being more popular than ourselves or having more materially than we do. Seldom, do we think of the responsibilities and additional problems that this might entail. Even unbelievers recognize the sin of envy (Mark 15:10). John the Baptist gives us the best answer to envy. While the chief priests were envious of Christ’s notoriety and popularity, John the Baptist stated, “He must increase and I must decrease (John 3:30). The disciples were continually squabbling about who was the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus used the illustration of a child in Matthew 18:1-4 to show that greatness lies in humility. He also emphasized His own example of seeking to serve rather than being served or controlling others to show the pathway to greatness in God’s kingdom. By looking to and following these examples we fortify ourselves against falling into the envy trap.

The next sin mentioned is murder. The act itself is clearly forbidden in 1 Peter 4:15. Jesus pointed out in Matthew 5:21-22 that the act extended to anger particularly in the form of an ongoing grudge against another believer. It also covers insulting another believer’s intelligence and insulting another believer’s character. This clearly shows us some of what it means to hate one’s fellow-believer. 1 John 3:14-15 clearly shows that habitual hatred toward another believer is the same as murder and that such a professing believer who has this habitual hatred toward another believer is not yet a genuine believer and has not yet really trusted Christ. The solution for

such a person is not to start loving the believer in question but to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Hating a believer would include having the financial means to help meet a need that he is unable to meet and not helping him (1 John 3:17-18). We cannot escape the clear teaching of these verses. The verses in 1 John 3:14-15 are not talking about occasional failures to love believers but is talking about ongoing and characteristic failure. The Greek present tense which speaks of ongoing and characteristic action brings out this truth. We must always remember that love is not simply a feeling or sentiment but involves our actions (1 John 3:17-18). Love is, of course, the cure for murder (Romans 13:8-10).

The next sin that is mentioned is strife. Quarreling or fighting would fall under this sin. Many times combative men will try to goad other men into a fight but Proverbs 20:3 tells us that keeping away from strife is the honorable thing to do despite what many men think to be the case. The person who would strive is called a fool (one who knows God's word but chooses to disobey- Matthew 7:24-27). 2 Timothy 2:24-25 states that the one who would serve God is commanded to not quarrel but show kindness to everyone, show some aptitude in teaching the truth of God regarding the situation, react with patience when wronged and show gentleness to the opposing party or parties (sensitivity to their viewpoint and how they see things). The purpose of this is to bring those in opposition to the knowledge of the truth to the needed change of mind. Finally, as believers, we are called upon to pursue peace with all people (Hebrews 12:14). The question should always be, did we win the peace, and not did we win the argument?

The sin of deceit is one that characterizes our old sin nature. We read in Ephesians 4:22, "*That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.*" (NKJV). Our very sinful desires appear to be legitimate desires but are in fact at odds with God's best plans for our lives. Our new nature received at salvation is based on truth rather than deceit according to Ephesians 4:24. We are responsible to decide which nature will prevail in our thinking and conduct. We are commanded not to be deceived about: our sinfulness and God's goodness in James 1:16; about the destructive results of hanging around bad company in 1 Corinthians 15:33, about the true condition of people who live sinful lifestyles characterized by certain sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; the fact that people cannot get away with mocking God without destructive consequences (Gal. 6:7-8), and by the enticing words of human

viewpoint systems of thoughts and behavior in Colossians 2:4, 8). We ourselves are to be models of truthfulness by speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and putting away lying (Ephesians 4:25). We must be involved daily with other believers in mutual encouragement so that we do not find ourselves hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13). Remember, deceit is simply a lie dressed up as the truth. We know where it comes from (Satan - John 8:44) and where it is not going (heaven - Revelation 21:27; 22:15). When we listen and when we speak, we need to remember whose side we are on.

The sin of malice is discussed. This is a sin that is best defined by contrasting it with Romans 13:10, *"Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law"* (NKJV). Malice is a desire, words, or behavior which is calculated to harm someone. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to avoid being swept into this common sin that has resulted from the downward evolution of people, we must put this sin aside if we are to be imitators of God (Ephesians 4:32-5:1). If we want to grow spiritually, this sin has to go (1 Peter 2:1-2). It is overcome as we practice kindness, compassion and forgiveness according to Ephesians 4:31-32). If we love other people as much as we love ourselves, then we will be behaving the very opposite of malice according to Romans 13:10. Such love cannot be produced in our own strength but only as we walk in the Spirit by trusting Christ to supply the power (Galatians 5:16, 22-23 cp. 3:1-3 and Colossians 2:6).

The next sin pattern is gossip and slander. One of the truths about gossip is that there is pleasure in it. 1 Corinthians 13:6 states that "love does not delight in evil" (NIV). The NAS translation of Proverbs 20:19 cautions us not to associate with a gossip. Gossip is about spreading information that we do not know is true because we want to believe it or because we do not care. While slander is more intentional concerning spreading lies or misinformation about someone, gossip is simply indifferent. The remedy for these sins is to take time to hear both sides of a situation (Proverbs 18:17) and to hear people out before responding (Proverbs 18:13). If we are wise, we are going to seek knowledge as we listen (Proverbs 18:15) and not opinions or speculations. To avoid these sins, we are to speak that which builds up, shows grace and does not tear down (Ephesians 4:29) and that speaks the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15, 25). In relation to other believers, it should follow the pattern of Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1 which emphasize restoration, gentleness and keeps matters as

confidential as possible. In relation to unbelievers, we are to be careful not to judge them (1 Corinthians 5:12-13) and to promote a good testimony (Titus 2:7-8) before them.

The next sin is hatred of God. We ordinarily do not think of believers as indulging in this sin. The measure of our love for God is obedience to His word (1 John 5:2-3). Also if we hate believers, we show that we hate God according to 1 John 4:20-21. Many believers have strayed in their view of God from what He reveals concerning Himself in scripture. They say such things as "My God would not do that." Yet many times the scripture states that God does certain things that we may not be comfortable with. Idolatry occurs by distorting the nature of the true God by emphasizing the likeable attributes while denying or minimizing the attributes of God that we find unpleasant. This is a form of hating God. We are commanded to love with our whole being and efforts according to Matthew 22:37-38. The failure of believers to do this calls for repentance (Revelation 2:4-5). With the unbeliever, God is hated because He represents to them a cosmic killjoy and one who thwarts their pursuit of pleasure, possessions and prominence. Until they change their mind (referred to as repentance) and come to terms with God as He really is rather than how they want Him, they are unable to savingly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

We come to the word "insolent" which carries the meaning of being rude and disrespectful. This sin has been a large part of the downward evolution of people. Unfortunately believers have fallen in step with the world on this one. We are warned to show respect for all people in 1 Peter 2:17 including those in authority. This attitude affects people in the way that we communicate such as store clerks and government officials. We are to be careful in the workplace to show full respect for our boss because if we fail to do so, we dishonor God and our doctrine (1 Timothy 6:1). By replacing insolent speech and behavior with respect or honor we demonstrate the reality of Christ to a culture that is indifferent to Christ while being in dire need of Him at the same time.

We come to the terms arrogant and boastful. Arrogance involves thinking that we have arrived in whatever we are doing. To be sure we may be very good at what we are doing. Arrogance results in looking down on others. James 3:14 warns us to be honest rather than arrogant whenever we see selfish ambition in our hearts. James 4:16 tells us that arrogance is at the root of our boasting. The antidote for arrogance is humility recognizing that

our sufficiency is from God (2 Corinthians 3:5, that we are what we are by the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:10) and that apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5). We can plan for the future, but we must not presume upon the future. When we presume upon the future, we are being arrogant and boastful (James 4:13-16). We must remember that we plan our ways but God directs our steps (Proverbs 16:9). We are told in Proverbs 27:2 to let others praise us and not our own mouth. 1 Peter 5:5-6 instructs us to humble ourselves under God's power and that He will exalt us at the proper time. After all, God knows the best time and the best way to exalt us.

The term inventors of evil points out the new and creative ways that people find to circumvent laws, restrictions and mechanisms designed to prevent other evils. For example, people find ways to steal information from computers of government and large corporations that have several security devices in place. Man's creativity was designed to be used for the glory of God. Unfortunately, people have used it in corrupt ways. Think of all the sexual parlor games that have been developed by high school and college students. Spouses find ingenious ways to cheat on one another instead of putting their minds to figuring out creative ways to enrich their marriage in its physical and other aspects. The Pharisees, for example, found a way to try to circumvent God's law to honor parents by pledging the money to be used to help needy parents to God and yet being able to get it back for their own use at some subsequent time. They fooled the scribes and themselves but not God and Jesus (Mark 7:7-13). The downward evolution of man has brought more and more lethal and destructive means to harm one another. Using our creativity to find ways to obey God's word in a way that sheds the light and glory on Him, instead of ourselves, is the best way to avoid becoming an inventor of evil.

Disobedience to parents is the foundation for how children learn to relate to authority. If parents allow them to get by with disobedience, then the child learns that those God has placed in authority do not have to be obeyed. It translates to disobedience to government authorities (Romans 13:1-2) such as the teachers in the schools and policemen. It translates to job problems because of disobedience in the work place (Ephesians 6:5-8). For girls it translates into marital problems due to disobedience (Ephesians 5:22) because she has not learned to obey while a child. Such patterns cause problem soldiers in the military. Both parents and children have responsibility in this sin in the downward evolution of people. Parents must

be sure that children are not allowed and enabled to escape responsibility but instead make sure that the child is taught at a very early age to face responsibility. This helps the child in making more godly choices. Obedience to parents ends when we are of age according to Hebrews 11:24-25). Parents have a short time to make a large difference in how well their children do in this area. It is a stewardship which cannot be neglected.

One of the outcomes of the downward evolution of people is a lack of spiritual understanding. Part of the problem is willful ignorance of those who mock the second coming and the facts of creation and the flood (2 Peter 3:3-6). When people build their system of thought on speculation rather than revelation, they destroy their understanding (Ephesians 4:17-18). This is caused by the blindness of their heart (Ephesians 4:18) and the fact that they lack the Holy Spirit to spiritually discern the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). This consequence can also affect believers as in the case of the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3:1-13 and the Hebrews in Hebrews 5:11-14. The cause is a failure to act in obedience on what they have learned from God's word. It does not extinguish the light of the Holy Spirit in their lives but it does dim it significantly. This is called carnal blindness in 2 Peter 1:9; Psalm 40:12). The remedy for the unbeliever is to place their trust in Christ for salvation so that they have the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the remedy for the believer is to abide in God's word by obeying it (John 8:31-32 cp. James 1:25). Then there is obedience and the improvement in spiritual understanding.

The term untrustworthy carries the meaning of someone who does not abide by what they say. It was used of those who broke covenants whether spoken or written. Many people speak of an era when an individual's word was his bond while noting that in today's world, this is no longer true. It is another aspect of the downward evolution of people. Many times believers make agreements that they find very difficult to keep. They want to extricate themselves from this and sin to do so. There are those who deal unfaithfully with their spouse in breaking the covenant that they made to be faithful (Malachi 2:14; Proverbs 2:17). Psalm 37:21 tells us that it is a sin to borrow and not repay. Many believers end up going into debt to handle finances rather than making sacrifices. More than one believer has owed money but yet feels it is okay to eat out and leave the debt unpaid. Psalm 15:4 states that one swears to his own hurt and does not change is the one who abides in close fellowship with God. Under the

New Covenant believers are to stand behind what they say just as surely as it were an oath (James 5:12) even if it is not in their best interests to do so. Over the years, I have found that some believers are very careless in keeping their word. Many times, it is simply a matter of not writing it down on a calendar or other tracking device. Even if the failure to keep their word is unintentional, it adds to the perception that believers are no different than anyone else and that faith in Christ is nothing more than an upper story experience without any real meaning or significance. Being trustworthy not only pleases God, it sets an example for other believers who may be tempted to weasel out of their agreements. This is a definite area where we need to not only set a good example but hold one another accountable.

The term unloving is the Greek word translated in the KJV “without natural affection.” This speaks of the love that is found in families. The appearance of this sin in the downward evolution of people is reflected by the increasing rates of child and elder abuse, neglect or exploitation. The rate of spousal abuse and divorce also show this sinful pattern. These behaviors are not the way that God intended for people to live. Exodus 21:15, 17 speak of the sins of assaulting parents and speaking badly to them or of them. Proverbs 28:24 speaks of those who rob their parents. 1 Timothy 5:4, 8 make it very clear that men are to care for their families including parents and grandparents. Mark 7:7-13 makes it clear that it is wrong for grown children to make impoverished parents go without needs by giving the money that could help the parents to God’s work. Jeremiah 7:31 spoke of the awful practice of parents offering their children as burnt offering to the false God Molech. Parents who fail to properly discipline their children show that they hate their children regardless of what they may say (Proverbs 13:24). By failing to properly discipline their children, they are increasing the likelihood that the child will grow up and end up landing in Hell (Prov. 23:14). Failure in that area is worse than sacrificing the child to Molech. The practice of scriptural love in the home undergirds the behaviors that demonstrate the natural affection that God intended.

The term unmerciful has two ideas. One is seeing a real need of a fellow human being, having the means to do something to make things better and doing something to address it as in Luke 10:25-37 (focus on v. 37). The second idea of mercy is showing forgiveness as in Mark 11:25. This type of forgiveness will at least refrain from taking or desiring to take vengeance. The third idea of mercy is forgiveness for the purpose of

restoring fellowship as in Luke 17:3-4 which requires repentance of the offending party. There is a promise that if we show mercy in our dealings with people, God will show mercy to us in His dealings with us (Matthew 5:7). We see the results of failing to follow God's plan for interpersonal relations in terms of grudges, people in court battles and people doing violence to one another to settle conflicts. As believers we need to be practitioners of mercy knowing that we have a God who has shown us much mercy (Ephesians 4:32).

We notice that people do have a sense or knowledge that their actions bring consequences imposed by God's ordinance (appointed judgment) that the practice of these behaviors is deserving of death. Despite this knowledge, they continue to do these same behaviors and to also give approval to others who practice these behaviors. This speaks of vicarious enjoyment of the sins of others. The NIV states that love does not delight in wickedness. As believers, we know that, although we have been delivered from a judgment of condemnation (John 5:24), that sin invites an extra load of suffering or discipline from God in the form of weakness and in some cases illness and even premature physical death (1 Corinthians 11:30-32). Furthermore, we have other consequences such as loss of joy (Psalm 51:12), loss of peace (Isaiah 48:18); unheard prayer (Psalm 66:18); loss of spiritual sight or understanding (Psalm 40:12) and loss of blessing (Jeremiah 5:25). The remedy for being caught up in this last aspect of the downward evolution of people is to live for God's blessing by obeying God's word (Luke 11:28).

C. The witness of conscience and human failure (Rom. 2:1-16)

Roman 2:1 – People will not be able to say that they did not know that some of these sinful practices mentioned in the last verses of Romans 1 were wrong. People will say that some of these practices are wrong and then turn around and do them. This means: (1) They knew the behavior or thought pattern was wrong; (2) They gave clear evidence that they knew these behaviors or thought patterns were wrong by denouncing others; and (3) They went ahead and did one or more of these sinful behavior or thought patterns. This shows that everyone has a conscience. The conscience tells us whether a behavior or thought pattern is right or wrong. The human conscience is part of our heart (Hebrews 10:22). Our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). This means that while our conscience is a witness to the fact that there is right and wrong, it

is a fallible witness. Yet it is still obviously able to show us that we are sinners. We know that people handle the fact that they are sinners in a numbers of ways. Some look for a solution (e.g. Cornelius in Acts 10). Some could care less. Others try to devise their own solution through idolatry. Still others try to work themselves into a right relationship with God through works (Romans 9:30-33). This verse in Romans 2:1 is very helpful in exposing people who think all morality is relative to the fact of their own sin because it shows that they have some type of standard by which they judge some behaviors as wrong.

Romans 2:2 – We learned in Romans 2:1 that people who are not acquainted with scripture have a sense of what is right and wrong by the fact that they do things that they declare to be wrong when others do them. In this verse it clearly points out that God's judgment is against people who denounce others for doing certain things and then turn around and do them. This judgment is not arbitrary but is based on a standard. It is based on truth. Jesus defined scripture as truth in John 17:17. Despite what the world says or thinks there is absolute truth defined and set forth by God. In John 12:48 Jesus said that the standard that would judge people in the last day would be the word which He had spoken. This includes the words spoken during His earthly ministry (John 14:26) and the words given by Him through the Holy Spirit to the Apostles and their associates (John 16:12-15). Together this constitutes what is in our New Testament. Without the gospel (Christ's death for our sins and His bodily resurrection providing a salvation received by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and these works of Christ – 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 1:16), people who know they are sinners do not have enough information to be saved. They only have enough information to hang themselves, i.e. to be judged by God. Our job is to raise their level of enlightenment by sharing the gospel with them (Romans 1:14-16) and by doing our good works in manner that glorifies God (Matthew 5:16). When we do this the Holy Spirit takes God's word and penetrates their hearts (Ephesians 6:17) so that He can convict them of their sin of unbelief in Christ (John 16:8-9).

Romans 2:3-5 – Knowing what is right and wrong and passing judgment on people who do wrong does nothing to justify any individual before God because sooner or later we will find ourselves practicing those things which we condemn on a mental attitude level if not on a behavioral level. The only way to escape the judgment of God is to place our faith in Christ (John 3:18; 5:24). People who are not believers often take a very light attitude

toward God's kindness, tolerance and patience. This kindness is not so that these people can continue to live in enjoyment and peace apart from God. God intends it to soften people's hearts so that they will change their mind and trust Christ. Repentance involves discarding whatever is keeping them from trusting Christ such as sin, their own righteousness, their religious affiliation, their family or their sincerity. At the same time, repentance includes placing that faith or trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is exactly what repentance means for the unsaved person. Unfortunately, most people choose to become stubborn and not change their mind. When they do this, despite God's kindness to them, they store up additional wrath for themselves for the time when God's righteous judgment is revealed and His wrath falls on them. Many times new believers or immature believers rage at the fact that the unsaved get by with all sorts of behavior that they do not get by with. These immature believers fail to realize that God is disciplining them to move them into an obedient faith based lifestyle (Hebrews 12:5-11). At the same time, God is not doing anything to the unbelievers at this time because he is trying to soften their heart with His kindness. Some believers, despite this information, disagree with God and want Him to take action immediately. We must remember that God is who He reveals Himself to be and not what some human being believes He ought to be. After all, God put up with our rebellion before we were saved and it is only by His grace (=undeserved goodness) that we are not currently sitting in the lake of fire.

Romans 2:6 - Both believers and unbelievers are judged according to their works. These judgments are not to determine whether someone is going to heaven or to hell. If one has placed their faith in Christ, they are not condemned (John 3:18) and if they have not placed their faith in Christ, they are condemned already. The judgment of the believers' works is to determine whether or not they receive a reward. Rewards are gained by works while salvation is received by simple faith in Christ. This judgment occurs at the time believers are raised from the dead (Luke 14:14). This occurs before the 1000 year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:6). The details of the judgment of believers are recorded in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. The judgment of the unbelievers occurs after the 1000 years Revelation 20:6, 11-15. Revelation 20:12-13 makes it very clear that they are judged according to their works. In Luke 12:47-48 Jesus described the principles of their judgment. Again this judgment does not determine whether they go to heaven or hell. It simply determines the degree of punishment that they will experience in hell. As a result our job in the great commission is two-

fold. We share the gospel to help the unbeliever avoid hell (Mark 16:15), and we teach believers to obey everything Christ commanded, i.e. the commandments of the New Testament, so that they will experience abundant life which brings present blessings and future rewards. The sharing of the gospel has to do with helping unbelievers enter the Christian life while the teaching of obedience to the commands of Christ has to do with helping believers enjoy the Christian life.

Romans 2:7-11 – It would appear that salvation depends on our efforts. However, we must understand that Paul beginning in Romans 1:18 through Romans 3:20 is showing why all people are sinners and under condemnation. God's standard for gaining eternal life is to persevere in doing good, seek for God's glory, honor and immortality. The sad fact is that all have sinned and fall short of that glory (Romans 3:23). For that reason, God's plan was to have the sinless Jesus die as a substitute for our sins, be raised bodily from the dead and offer to credit Christ's righteousness to us as a free gift receive wholly by faith apart from any works or deeds on our part. To sum it up: The standard for salvation is perseverance in living a perfectly sinless life. The way of salvation is to simply trust Christ crucified and risen for the salvation He provided. When we do that, we receive the gift of righteousness by faith alone. The way of salvation had to be different from the standard of salvation because the only one who could meet God's standard was Jesus Christ.

We have seen that this passage refers to God's standard for salvation, not God's way of salvation. The benefit of salvation is eternal life. This refers not to the present aspect of eternal life which is received at the moment of trusting Christ (Luke 7:50; John 5:24; 3:36) but the future aspect of eternal life which we receive when Christ returns (Luke 18:30; Titus 1:2). This future aspect is when we receive our resurrection bodies (Romans 8:11). Notice the contrasting futures of the saved (glory, honor and peace) and the unsaved (wrath, indignation, tribulation, distress). Once one reads Romans 3:9-23, one realizes that all of us deserve the results of the unsaved experience and that God's grace and love has made the only way to escape these results - faith alone in Christ alone. There is truly no partiality with God on this issue.

Some Bible teachers understand that this passage refers to the results of faith in Christ and the results of rejection of Christ as in 1 John 3:6-10. This is one of those passages which could be applied as set forth in the previous two paragraphs, or it could be applied as noted here.

Romans 2:12-16 - God states the criteria of judgment for Jewish and non-Jewish people. He states that the Jews who sinned under the law will be judged by the law. *Romans 3:19-20* makes it clear that the law gives the knowledge of sin and finds everyone guilty before God. God states that the non-Jewish people, i.e. the Gentiles who have sinned without the presence of the law of Moses will perish without that law. The Gentiles or non-Jewish people have the law of God written in their hearts where their conscience affirms and accuses them they will perish without the law of Moses. They will be condemned by the law of God in their conscience. In *Romans 3:9* God affirms that both Jew and Gentile are lost and under sin. There is a time according to the teaching of the gospel that God will judge the secrets of people. As stated before this will be through Jesus Christ (*John 5:22, 27*). The statement is made that the doers of the law will be justified and not the hearers. This refers to the law of Moses for the Jews and the law of conscience for the Gentiles. This again is the standard for salvation and not the way of salvation. Everyone is a hearer of the law but not a doer of the law and therefore under condemnation. In summary we have seen why the gospel is needed. It is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes (*Romans 1:16*). The knowledge of creation does not save but condemns (*Romans 1:19-20*). The knowledge of the law of conscience and the knowledge of the law of Moses do not save but only condemn.

D. The witness of the Law and human failure (*Rom. 2:17-3:8*)

Romans 2:17-20 – This section of *Romans* was directed against the Jewish people. Its application for people in our world today falls not only on the Jews but those who profess to know Christ but are relying on their righteous life to save them, i.e. salvation by works. This, of course, is contrary to how God does things (*Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; Isaiah 64:6*). These people are familiar with the word of God and believe they are saved by obeying the commandments in it to the exclusion of complete reliance on the crucified and risen Christ. They believe that they are okay with God. They know what God's will and standards are being taught by His word. Like the Jewish people of old they make disciples for themselves who are even more condemned than they were before (*Matthew 23:15*). These people are described as blind, lost in darkness, ignorant, and children. They see the commandments of God as all the truth and knowledge that is needed. Yet these only give them the knowledge of sin and fail to give them justification with God (*Romans 3:20*). In this they fail

to see themselves as sinners in need of God's remedy, the gospel. Salvation is by grace through faith so that we have no occasion for boasting (Ephesians 2:8-9). If we must boast, let us boast about the Lord Jesus Himself and not in anything special concerning ourselves or our deeds (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Romans 2:21-24 – Here we see the fact that Israel has failed God by not practicing what they preach and teach. This has application to both counterfeit and genuine Christians in today's world. We must be like Ezra in Ezra 7:10, *"For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel."* (NASB). Before we can effectively teach God's commandments in His word, we must be obeying them. If we tell others to not steal, commit adultery and idolatry but participate in these sins in our own lives, we dishonor God even though we know what God's word says and teaches concerning these things. The principle is that we cause the unsaved to dishonor God and have no use for His word if we fail to practice what we teach. All of us as believers will sooner or later find ourselves having failure in this, but we need to confess the sin and forsake it by bringing our lives into harmony with God's word (Proverbs 28:13).

Romans 2:25-29 – For the Jewish believer circumcision is beneficial if he were to obey the entire law. However, if he breaks even one commandment of that law, he is a violator of all the law including the law of circumcision because if one disobeys one command, he is counted by God as disobeying all commands (James 2:10). Therefore, his obedience to the command of circumcision would be made uncircumcision. On the other hand, if someone who is not physically circumcised fulfills the law's requirements, then his lack of circumcision is counted as circumcision. No one can keep the law so the only way that this can occur is for one to place his faith in Christ who fulfilled the law and have Christ's righteousness put to His credit (Romans 4:3-5). When anyone trusts Christ as Savior, he is spiritually circumcised by faith in the working of God who raised Christ from the dead (Col. 2:11-12). Notice, it will be the Jews who fulfill the law by trusting Christ who in the end will participate in judging those Jews who tried to keep the law by works rather than accepting the gift of righteousness which comes by faith in Christ.

We noted that among Jewish people, the issue is fulfilling the demands of the law, which only can be credited to them by trusting Christ as Savior. To

be a Jew in right standing with God is not a matter of outward or physical circumcision or being born a Jew. The Jew who is in right standing with God is one who is born a Jew and is one inwardly where God has circumcised the heart by faith in Christ (Colossians 2:11-12). This circumcision of the heart is done by the Holy Spirit and not by keeping the law. This Jew who is a believer in Christ will not find any praise coming from people but will find it coming from God. This passage does not teach that Gentiles who trust Christ become spiritual Jews as some have tried to teach. Rather it teaches that the Jews who trust Christ are the real Israel (Romans 9:6-8 cp. 4:13-16). The reason we know that the interpretation set forth is correct is because the context leading up to this is speaking of the Jews in Romans 2:17-24 and the context continues following this speaks to the Jewish people in Romans 3:1-8).

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Romans 3:1-2 - Since a saving relationship with God is not based on being a Jew or being circumcised, the question is raised as to what advantage there was to having this special relationship that the Jews had with God. The answer is that it was considerable in every way because the words

spoken by God were transmitted by them. This gave them special insight into God's will and God's plan. However, they squandered this privilege by creating a false works-based plan of salvation and by adding man-made rules to the plan. Today Christians have the complete revelation of God in the scriptures, and we have found various ways to squander it. Believers neglect the meeting together with other believers and so do not get to hear the word of God to grow in their faith (Romans 10:17). Many among what professes to be Christian have added manmade tradition to the scripture and thereby cancelling or diluting their teaching (Mark 7:1-13). In addition instead of rightly dividing God's word as commanded by 2 Timothy 2:15, they have twisted the scriptures to their own ruin as mentioned in 2 Peter 3:16. God's word is an important stewardship. Let us be faithful in guarding it, sharing it, teaching it and rightly dividing so that we do not wrongly divide genuine believers from one another.

Romans 3:3-4 – We continue discussing the plight of the early Jews with their unbelief despite having the very content of this faith in their hands as contained in the scriptures. It is noted that some were unfaithful or unbelieving. The question is raised as to whether their unbelief will cancel out God's faithfulness. The answer is an obvious no. When there is a conflict between what God's word says and what people say, then it is people who are lying and not God. Even if what a vast majority of or all people are saying is contrary to God's word, it is God who is telling the truth and people who are lying. God does not lie (Titus 1:2) and cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). The reasoning behind this is explained in Psalm 51:4. When God speaks, that is what is right whatever people may say to the contrary. Also this means that when God judges, He will prevail. It is God's thoughts and ways that will set the standard and the decision and not the words, thoughts and ways of people. Many mainline groups have left the word of God and think that by their counsels that they can make God's word mean anything they wish. Unlike the law of men which can be twisted beyond recognition, the word of God stands as unchanging truth (Psalm 119:89; Jn. 17:17).

Romans 3:5-6 - We have noted that the Jews with their disobedience to the law with which they were entrusted are under judgment. This is true of people today in Christian circles who have not trusted Christ and have not faced up to the fact that they are sinners in need of salvation. Some might try to say that the fact that they sin actually serves a good purpose because it shows how righteous and just God really is. Because our sin displays

God's righteousness, wouldn't it be unfair for God to punish us by bringing wrath on us? This is strictly human viewpoint reasoning. If God were somehow to fall in line with our reasoning, then He would not be qualified to judge the world. He would no longer be totally righteous and just. Just because God is able to use people's sinfulness to display His righteousness does not mean that He is not going to bring His righteous wrath on them. We will see that Paul is showing that both the religious and irreligious apart from Christ are under the wrath of God and in need of a Savior.

Romans 3:7-8 – Some of the Jewish people were trying to use the defense that their lie brought out God's truth more clearly. In doing so they were also bringing out God's glory. They were raising the question concerning why God would condemn them as a sinner if God's truthfulness and glory were being enhanced. Some of them were saying this to slander Paul and his associates by accusing them of teaching that we should do evil that good may come. God is able to turn cursing into blessing (Deut. 23:5). God may even mean for good the evil that people do to us (Gen. 50:20). However, this does not mean that it is right or okay to do evil to people so that God will turn it into good. People will still be condemned by God. The source of this type of thinking is reasoning from certain scriptures but failing to look at what the scriptures teach elsewhere. Trying to justify sin for pious reason never flies with God.

E. All people found guilty before God (Rom. 3:9-20)

Romans 3:9 – In Romans 1:14-17 Paul states God's remedy for the sin problem. In Romans 1:18 Paul states why the remedy is needed – because God's wrath against all unrighteousness and ungodliness has been revealed. In Romans 1:19-31, he shows that the Gentile (Non-Jewish) who choose to ignore or distort God are condemned. In Romans 2:1-16 he shows how that among the Gentiles (Non-Jews) both the moralist and those who willfully ignore or distort God and His values are condemned by the law of God revealed in their conscience. In Romans 2:17-3:8 he shows that the Jews, God's chosen people are condemned. In this verse he sums up his case by pointing out that both Gentile (non-Jewish) and Jewish people are all under sin. In Romans 3:10-18 Paul lays out 14 reasons that all people, both Jew and Gentile, are sinners in need of a Savior. He sums up the consequences in Romans 3:19-20 and lays out the details of the remedy provided by the gospel in Romans 3:21-5:11. The

gospel like good medicine provides the cure for the disease, sin. Left untreated sin kills with the second death. The verse sums up the fact that we all have the disease of sin. We will see the evidence of the sin diagnosis in the verses that follow.

Romans 3:10 - The first point cited by Paul in showing the guilt of the whole world before God is that no one has a righteousness that is sufficient for acceptance with God. Only Jesus Christ is the lone exception (1 Peter 2:22; 3:18). For this reason because we are unrighteous, we are under the wrath of God (Romans 1:18) which is revealed again all unrighteousness and ungodliness of people. When Christ lived on the earth, He was totally sinless and righteous, By dying in our place on the cross, He took the punishment for our sin. The moment we trust Christ our faith is counted as the righteousness we need to be accepted by God (Rom. 4:3-5, 22-23; Phil. 3:9). Because none of us are righteous, this is why we desperately need God's solution. This is the first of 14 reasons why people are lost.

Romans 3:11 – In his second and third points of evidence for the universal sinfulness of people, Paul starts his second point with the statement that no one keeps on understanding. This is not to say that unsaved people never have any understanding of the things of God. It is to say that they usually lack that understanding. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says in NASB, “*But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*” People who are unsaved and in their natural state lack the capacity to understand spiritual things, i.e. to see them from God's point of view. Neither do they accept or receive these things. When the light of the gospel shines into the heart of the unsaved and a person trusts Christ, then that individual has the Holy Spirit to live in them (Romans 8:9) and to teach them (John 14:26). Acts 17:27 shows that even the unsaved seek God but not on a usual basis. The present tense tells us that people do not usually seek God. Since Christ came to seek and to save those who are lost, there are times when God through the Holy Spirit meets those who are seeking Him such as the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8:26-39 and Cornelius in Acts 10:1-48. We will continue discussing the points of evidence that showcase the sinfulness of all people in the following verses.

Romans 3:12 - We examine the evidence of the sinfulness of all people by looking at the 4th, 5th and 6th points of evidence. In the 4th point obedience

to God is a picture of a path. The idea is that people at a decisive point of time have turned aside from this path. The first sin we committed derailed us from that path. Once again at a decisive point of time we became unprofitable to God. This is the 5th point of evidence showing our sinfulness and unworthiness of God's salvation. Because of this, God had no reason to redeem us except for the fact that out of His great love for us, by His grace He provided a salvation we could receive by simple child-like faith. God has not provided salvation for us, in other words, because there is a benefit for Him. Finally, there is no one who keeps on doing good. Here the Greek present tense is used showing what the usual reaction of people is not. Luke 6:33 makes it clear that the unsaved do good. However, they do not always do good. Jesus made it clear in Mark 10:18 that there is no one who is consistently good except God Himself. As we present the gospel to people, we must remember that they do good but that their good does not measure up to the absolute standard of perfection that God has.

Romans 3:13 - The 7th, 8th and 9th points all relate to the tongue. God gave us speech to glorify Him and to communicate with one another. Unfortunately, some people's speech is as foul as it can be. Ephesians 5:4 sets the standard for the believer in this area when it states that our speech is not to be filthy, have a double meaning or be gross or coarse. Lying or deceit originates from Satan (John 8:44) and is part of who we were before we trusted Christ (Ephesians 4:22-25). The final point in this verse relates to the deadliness of the tongue. We must be sure that our speech does not tear down. Ephesians 4:29 emphasizes the putting away of destructive speech and substituting that which edifies or builds up to give grace to people. For the unbeliever, these three points add to the evidence that sin is universal to all people. Foul language, deceit and destructive and deadliness characterize the speech of the unsaved. Their solution is faith in the gospel of grace which will not only deliver them from the penalty of sin but implant in them through the Holy Spirit a new tendency to practice righteousness and put off sin. We must not exhort the unsaved to put away these sins because they lack that tendency. Rather we must exhort them to accept God's solution by trusting Christ for salvation. Like fish once they are caught (i.e. saved), God will keep on cleaning them (practical sanctification).

Romans 3:14 - The 10th point that shows that all people are sinners is also related to the use of the tongue. This relates to cursing and bitterness.

Cursing here is not so much the use of profanity as it is the stating of ill will toward other people as in Romans 12:14. It is tempting to do this when other people mistreat us or do something unjust to us. Yet Romans 12:14 tells the believer to substitute blessing for cursing even toward those who persecute us. Bitterness is another sin that rages against our circumstances or other people for their perceived part in those circumstances. Wives can disappoint in the marriage relationship, and it is tempting to lash out against them in bitterness (Col. 3:18). Yet God commands us to express and demonstrate love toward them as a replacement in Colossians 3:19. Bitterness is listed in the context of putting off the behaviors of our lives prior to salvation (Eph. 4:31). We have a responsibility in our own lives and the lives of other believers to see that none of us fall short of God's grace in our lives (Hebrews 12:15). God's grace is to be on display in our relationships with other people rather than the bitterness which can cause many believers to be defiled, i.e. placed in a condition that significantly impairs their usefulness to God. Finally, we must remember that unbelievers display this type of speech in many cases, and this is another point that may help an unsaved person see their sinfulness and thereby their need for a Savior. It is important that we use God's word and live out the truth of God's word to show that this type of speech is displeasing to God.

Romans 3:15 - Murder is a sin that lives to one degree or another within each one of us – believer or unbeliever. It is the 11th point in God's demonstration that all people are indeed under sin and in desperate need of a savior. 1 John 3:15 states that hatred of a brother, i.e. believer is the same as murder. In Matthew 5:21 Jesus warned of the type of anger that holds grudges against a brother, i.e. believer. Even though most people never commit the act of murder, the thoughts mentioned in 1 John 3:15 and Matthew 5:21 are easily rushed into when the right temptation and circumstances occur. This is why believers must work on substituting self-control and peace and a sacrificial love into the situation. Instead of being quick to rush into the sinful thought patterns that precede an actual act of murder, we must heed the warning of scripture not to be quick to anger and to be slow to speak and yet be quick to listen (James 1:19). We must leave any vengeance to God (Romans 12:19). Psalm 37:7-9 in the NKJV gives excellent counsel, *"Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it only causes harm. For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait*

on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.” There is a new day and a new world coming. Those of us who have been purchased by the blood of Christ will reign with Him on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10; 20:6). Let us cease walking by sight and leaning to our own understanding but rather choose to walk by faith trusting in the Lord with all our heart (2 Corinthians 5:7; Proverbs 3:5).

Romans 3:16 – This is the 12th point of God’s indictment against the human race. These people have marked out life choices that represent their ways and not God’s ways. The results are eternal destruction and misery for sure and in some cases temporal destruction and misery (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 14:10-11). Their ways stand in contrast to God’s ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). In many cases believers choose to walk this path with them and suffer temporal destruction and misery. In other cases the paths or ways of these people cross the paths or ways of other people and spread the misery and destruction. The destruction and misery sometimes fall on the sinful people themselves or in other cases it falls upon other people not involved in that sin – be they believers or unbelievers. The destruction and misery sown by the unsaved sweep them ever closer to that judgment from which there is no remedy once it falls completely. At the same time it affects believers because of the pull of the world. The antidote for destruction is love because love edifies or builds up (1 Corinthians 8:1). The antidote for misery is the comfort of God which He gives to the believer in all of his afflictions (2 Cor. 1:3-4). Finally, as believers, we are to forsake our ways and thoughts and take upon ourselves the ways and thoughts of God (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Romans 3:17 – This is the 13th point of failure of people to meet God’s standards for eligibility to enter heaven. Peace with God is by one way and one way only. Romans 5:1 states that peace with God comes through being justified by faith in Christ. Christ makes it very clear that there is no alternative in John 14:6. People insist that it is God who is in the wrong rather than themselves according to Ezekiel 33:17, 20 and are told that God will judge them anyway according to their ways. Still other insist that if one is sincere that God will save them. Yet Proverbs 14:12 makes it clear that even though a way seems right to someone, that does not mean that they are accepted before a righteous and holy God. Paul made it clear that if there had been a law code that could have brought salvation, then salvation would have been by keeping those commandments (Galatians 3:21). People complain that the way to peace with God is narrow-minded

and they are correct. Jesus said that the way to God which is only through Him (John 10:1, 9) is narrow and that there are few that take the narrow way (Matthew 7:13-14). Because people want God and acceptance with Him on their own terms, they have not known the way of peace. Our job is to bring them the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15).

Romans 3:18 - A lack of the fear of God is common among the unsaved. They do not believe in the reality of hell. They believe that God should be God on their terms and not His own revealed terms. When people trust Christ as Savior, He implants the fear of God in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Him. This implanted fear comes from the Holy Spirit who is called in Isaiah 11:2, "The Spirit of the fear of the LORD." Fear of the Lord helps people to recognize that God has both the power and the authority to cast them into hell (Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:5). This represents the 14th and final indictment against the sinfulness of people. As believers, we must continually practice and live in the fear of God knowing that God is to be taken seriously. How can we expect the unsaved to take God seriously if we fail to do so ourselves? Psalm 111:10 reminds us that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom which is the obedient application of what we know of God's word.

Romans 3:19 - The sinfulness of mankind as proved by 14 points of scripture is summed up. The law does not serve as a vehicle of justification. It says to everyone under its commandments that they and the whole world are guilty. God's law reflects His righteousness and His standards and shows that everyone without exception fails to meet those standards. While this is speaking of the Old Testament law, the same principle would be true in relation to the law of God revealed in everyone's conscience. In God's sight the verdict is guilty as charged. Not only does the law show that we are guilty because we fail to meet the Divine standard. It also keeps us from boasting. Our works do not provide salvation nor do they receive or appropriate salvation (Ephesians 2:9). This is to prevent us from boasting. Boasting is excluded because we are justified by God by faith apart from any works (Romans 3:27-28). Two functions of the law in relation to our salvation are readily seen: (1) to show our guilt and therefore our condemnation and need of a savior and (2) to keep us humble and from boasting about anyone except the Lord Himself (1 Corinthians 1:26, 31).

Romans 3:20 – Since all of us are thoroughly convicted by God’s word as sinners and without anything that we can say in our defense, we need some means of being justified in God’s sight. This verse is very key to unlocking the alleged contradiction between Paul in Romans 4 and James in James 2:22, 24. 1 Samuel 16:7 tells us that God looks on the heart while people look on the outward appearance. This verse in Romans 3:20 explicitly tells us that works or deeds will not justify us in God’s sight. Romans 3:28 tells us that justification comes from God by faith without works. James 2:22, 24 does say that works justify people but readers consistently overlook the first two words in James 2:22, 24 which are “you see.” In the sight of you, i.e. people, justification comes by works because without works people (who cannot see the heart) cannot see our faith. Finally, the purpose of the law is to act not as a thermostat but a thermometer. It tells us that we are all sinners under the just condemnation of a righteous and holy God. Therefore, people need the one and only remedy or solution that God has for the problem of sin and its consequences of eternal condemnation and separation from God. The rest of Romans 3 along with chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to this most important theme.

F. Salvation and Justification is by faith (Rom. 3:21-5:11)

Romans 3:21-22 - The availability of the righteousness that God requires is revealed apart from obedience to the law. Leviticus 18:5 which is quoted in Romans 10:5 and Galatians 3:12 tells us that the one who would have the righteousness of God would be the one who receives life by obedience to the law. Since no one other than Christ has successfully obeyed the Old Testament law, then another way is needed. The New Covenant now states that there is another way to receive the righteousness that God requires other than by perfect obedience to the Old Testament law. This other way is witnessed to or testified to in the Old Testament law in Genesis 15:6 and in the prophets in Habakkuk 2:4. This righteousness that God provides apart from perfect obedience to the commandments of the Old Testament law is received by faith in Christ. Everyone who believes or trusts Christ for salvation receives the righteousness as a gift which is put to the account of the believing sinner. It does not matter whether the person is a Jew or Gentile, male or female, rich or poor, or religious or irreligious. Our job is make sure that people know just how bad off they are because God’s standard is do or die. On the other hand, we must also explain how God has provided the way to free us from the law of

sin and death by placing our faith in His perfect provision for our sin problem.

Romans 3:23 - This explains why God has credited or imputed His righteousness to those who believe in or trust in Christ without any distinction. That reason is that all people sin. The perfect righteousness that God requires for entry into heaven is pictured as a target that must be hit for entry into heaven. Everyone has missed the target. For that reason another way was designed to give sinful people a way to possess the righteousness that God requires. Not only have all people sinned but they continue to fall short of the glory of God. What is the glory of God. By carefully examining Exodus 33:18-19, 22, we see that God's glory is all His goodness. So Romans 3:23 shows that we continually fall short of all God's goodness. For this reason Jesus said that no one is good but God alone. (Mark 10:18).

Romans 3:24 – When we place our faith in Christ we keep on being justified through the redemption that is available to us in Christ Jesus. This redemption by His bloodshed death is received by faith in Christ.

Justification is the act of God by which he declares and treats the believing sinner as righteous and also forgives him from all things (Acts 13:38-39, This would include sins and errors concerning the provision and reception of salvation. Redemption emphasizes that the believer has been set free from the penalty of sin by the payment of a price. That price is, of course, the shed blood of Christ. God's grace provides this salvation which is received by faith as a gift. This is another passage that show salvation cannot be lost. Because it is connected with Romans 3:22 we know that once that faith in Christ is exercised, God keeps on justifying us. Notice that this ongoing justification is by God's grace as a gift. This emphasizes that no works are involved (Romans 4:16; 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9). The phrase "in Christ Jesus" speaks of the fact that the Holy Spirit baptized us into Christ when we placed our faith in Him so that we are "in Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:11-12). This is the connecting link to all of Christ's work for us which includes justification through redemption.

Romans 3:25 - God sent Jesus to provide a sacrifice which satisfied God's righteousness and justice. This sacrifice satisfied God's righteous and holy judgment against the sins of all people (1 John 2:2). This does not mean all people are saved but that this propitiation or satisfaction was provided for all people. They do not receive its benefits until they receive Christ by

faith for the salvation that was provided. The bloodshed death of Christ demonstrated the righteousness of God because He had because of His forbearance or tolerance passed over the sins that were committed under the Old Covenant. In Exodus 12:13 God had stated that when He saw the blood of the animal sacrifices, He would pass over the sins that were committed and not bring judgment. The Old Testament sacrifices covered but did not take away sins. The word translated in the Old Testament as “atone” in all its forms means to cover. Jesus by His sacrifice took away the sins of the world (John 1:29). The message is as in Acts 17:30-31. God had overlooked the time of ignorance concerning the sin problem but now commands everyone to change their mind to trust Christ (Acts 17:31, 34).

Romans 3:26 – God showed Jesus as the one who propitiated or satisfied His righteous judgment against our sins not only to demonstrate His righteousness in passing over sins committed under the Old Covenant but also to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time (the age of grace or the church age). This enables Him to be just toward those who trusted Christ as Savior and also to be the justifier of the one who trusts Christ. God is able to be just because Christ paid the price to propitiate or satisfy God’s righteous judgment against our sins. Because God’s justice has been satisfied by Christ’s sacrifice, He is free to exercise grace to justify the sinful person who trusts Christ. All of us can be thankful that God is the justifier and not simply just.

Romans 3:27-28 – There are those who state that if faith is our responsibility that this would make it a work. However, this passage clearly shows that is not the case. There is no merit in faith. Faith is simply the God-appointed means by which a believer receives justification. We have no reason to boast about being justified because there is nothing we can do to be justified. The word “justified” in this passage is present tense in the Greek showing that our faith in Christ lays hold of justification in an ongoing manner. This verse is saying that we keep on being justified by faith apart from any works. This rules out the idea that we must somehow maintain our justification by works as taught by some. The formula is faith – works = ongoing justification. At the moment saving faith is exercised, we have been justified at that point with ongoing results (Romans 5:1). There is, therefore, no reason for us to boast except in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Romans 3:29-30 – Since all people are convicted as sinners by the Old Testament law for the Jews and by the law of conscience for the non-Jews or Gentiles, and since both need God's remedy for that sin problem because of the condemnation and wrath that this sin problem brings, God remedies this by justifying both groups (Jew and non-Jew/Gentile) by faith in Christ. This makes God the God of all people not just the God of the Jews. This is supported by Jeremiah 10:10 which testifies that the God of the Bible is the true God. These verses go on to re-enforce the fact that there is one God. We respond to that oneness by accepting His assessment of our lostness because of our sin and its accompanying condemnation, then by accepting His solution of Christ's substitutionary bloodshed death and bodily resurrection as the only solution, and finally trusting Christ and this solution apart from anything we do or could do for our salvation from sin's penalty. Once we have received this message by faith, our role changes to communicating it to the needy people around us.

Romans 3:31 - Is the law of Moses completely irrelevant and meaningless because we receive the righteousness that God requires in His law by having it credited to us the moment we trust Christ? The answer to this is no, it is not meaningless. The law requires perfect righteousness. The failure, even once, to obey that law renders us guilty before a holy God. The law tells us two things before salvation. Firstly, we are sinners because by the law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20). Secondly, we are under the condemnation of spiritual death because of our failure to keep it. This is the curse (=sentence of judgment) of the law (Galatians 3:10). By His sacrificial, substitutionary and bloodshed death Jesus Christ took the law's curse (=sentence of judgment) for us and redeemed us from that curse (Galatians 3:13) so that we will not again be under that curse. Matthew 5:17 states that Christ came to fulfill the law's requirements. Because He did so, His perfect righteousness which kept that law is credited to our account when we trust Christ for salvation (1 Corinthians 1:30 cp. Romans 4:3-5, 23-24). In this way the law is upheld as righteous, holy, good and spiritual (Romans 7:12, 14) and not simply ignored. The difficulty of our job is convincing people that God does not grade on the curve but on the cross.

Romans 4:1-2 - Abraham is an exhibit of how God justifies an individual. If Abraham's justification were by works, then he would have something to boast about but not in God's sight. However, in God's sight this is not the case. In God's sight Abraham and any believer are justified by faith minus

any works before or after salvation. This makes it very clear that James in James 2:22, 24, 25 was speaking of justification in the sight of people being by works. This is supported by the words “you see” in both James 2:22, 24 and by the words “I will show you my faith by my works” in James 2:18. The reason Abraham had nothing to boast about is set forth in Romans 4:3 which we will be examining. Because it is faith and not works which appropriates the grace of God, there is no boasting in God’s sight (Romans 3:27; 4:2; Ephesians 2:8-9). Our justification is about boasting in the Lord and not ourselves (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Romans 4:3 - This verse explains why Abraham had nothing to boast about in God’s sight. He was accounted righteous in God’s sight because of His trust or faith and not because of anything that he did. Abraham stands in Romans 4:3-5 as an example of how people were saved prior to the law, and David in Romans 4:6-8 is an example of how people were saved who lived under the law of Moses. Both were saved by believing God and having righteousness put to their credit. When we trust Christ our faith in Him is counted as righteousness (Romans 4:23-24). Christ Himself is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). Notice there are no other conditions laid to the one believing in Christ. Our job in presenting the gospel is to make sure that people know that it is all by faith.

Romans 4:4-5 - If we were to successfully be able to work for our salvation or to attain the righteousness that God requires for it, it would not be a matter of grace (=the undeserved goodness of God) but a matter of something that God owes us. Any work, therefore, would mean that it was not grace (cp. Romans 11:6). The one who does not work to appropriate the salvation provided by God’s grace but believes in Him as the one justifies the ungodly, that belief or faith is accounted or credited as righteousness. This is why conditions such as water baptism, quitting sin, confessing or praying are false additions to the gospel. This humbles people and exalts God. After all, both salvation and living the Christian life are a matter of God being glorified not us.

Romans 4:6-8 – David is an example of one to whom righteousness was credited apart from any works. Since David lived under the law of Moses, this shows clearly that God was saving people by faith prior to the law – the example of Abraham and here under the law – the example of David. Having righteousness credited to us apart from works and by faith alone is said to be a blessing. Notice that God is keeping the books. This

righteousness is credited to us by God Himself and is said to be a gift. Romans 11:29 makes it very clear that God's gifts are not revocable. The forgiveness of our sins is also said to be a blessing. During the time of David, those sins were covered by the blood of the animal sacrifices. For us, living under the New Covenant, those sins are taken away by the sacrifice of Christ and not just covered (John 1:29; Hebrews 10:4, 11, 17-18). Finally, we are told that the Lord will never count our sins against us. This is very strong affirmation in the Greek language and speaks of the fact that our sins will in no way ever be counted against us. The same construction is used in Matthew 24:35 and John 10:28. In summary we have a three-fold blessing from God based on His grace and not our works: righteousness credited to us, forgiveness of sins and eternal security of our salvation. You may want to research this on the following website: <http://philgons.com/resources/bible/articles/emphatic-negation-drawing-out-the-riches-of-gods-promises/> .

Romans 4:9-12 – The blessing of having righteousness credited to an individual by faith in Christ is not just for the Jews who have been circumcised in obedience to God's command. It is also for those who place their faith in Christ who have not been circumcised. This would primarily be the Gentiles (=non-Jews). The life of Abraham himself answers this question. We are told in Genesis 15:6 that this righteousness was credited to Abraham when he exercised faith. The rite of circumcision was not required until Genesis 17 after the birth of Ishmael. Therefore, since Abraham was justified by faith prior to circumcision, the perfect righteousness that God requires is given by faith apart from the ritual of circumcision. This makes Abraham the spiritual father only of those Jews who believe in Christ not those Jews who do not place their faith in Christ. This also establishes the principle that rituals such as water baptism and the Lord's Supper have nothing to add to Christ's work on the cross nor to the simple faith in Christ required to receive the benefits of that work. Circumcision serves as a sign to the Jewish believers that their salvation is authentic. Water baptism in the present age serves as a sign or seal to believers that their faith is the real thing. Just as the sign at the edge of San Angelo states that it is 36 miles to Bronte is a sign only. Bronte is the reality. So circumcision under the Old Covenant and Baptism under the New Covenant are only signs. They are not the reality of the gift of salvation received by God's grace through our faith.

Romans 4:13-16 – Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world. However, this was not happen because of obedience to the law of Moses. Rather it was to happen by faith in which God credits righteousness to the believer. If obeying any type of law code was the basis for God's promise - because no one can obey it - the righteousness that God requires would have been by the law (Gal. 3:21). The law only brings wrath. When the law is taken off the table, figuratively speaking, then there is no wrath as a result of disobeying it. To bypass the law, the promise is received by faith so that it might be by grace. Grace and works (which any law-keeping would be) are not compatible in saving anyone from sin's penalty (Romans 11:6). This promise of heirship of the world for those who are justified by faith in Christ comes to all of Abraham's offspring. First of all, there is offspring which is of the law which refers to the Jewish believers who are physically descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Secondly, there are the offspring who are not Jewish, i.e. Gentiles, who are believers. Abraham is considered the father of both groups (see also Galatians 3:6-9). While good works are important for Christian living, they do not have any value in whole or in part, in receiving God's gift of righteousness. Only faith in Christ and His person and work accesses the grace of God.

Romans 4:17-18 – We have been looking at the Abrahamic fatherhood over all believers. He is the father in both a physical and spiritual sense to believing Jews and a father in a spiritual sense to non-Jews who believe. God made this declaration to Abraham who had placed His trust in God. This prediction has been fulfilled in both a physical and in a spiritual sense. The God who Abraham trusted is the one who gives life to the dead. Our God also calls those things which do not exist as though they did. There was no hope in a human view point assessment of Abraham's circumstances that would have lead any reasonable person to have looked forward to what God was promising. Yet in hope or expectation based upon God's word and God's power Abraham believed. The result was that God did what He had promised and made Abraham the father of many nations. As believers we face seemingly hopeless situations. Yet we are dealing with a God who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). The question is, am I going to live by sight or by the ultimate reality and truth of God's word?

Romans 4:19-21 – Abraham was able to look at his situation from a human viewpoint and God's viewpoint. Despite looking at his situation from a

human viewpoint, he did not let this weaken His faith in God's viewpoint and God's promises. From a human viewpoint his body was pretty well shot since he was 100 years old and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. God was still promising that they would have a baby together. Abraham did not go back and forth in believing that promise but grew even stronger in His faith or trust and gave glory or praise to God. Verse 21 defines faith for us as being fully assured that God was able to perform what He promised. As believers facing the problems of life, we have a tendency to do one of two things. One is to look so completely at our circumstances that we rule out the supernatural working of God. The other extreme is to deny our circumstances and blindly believe God will come through regardless of what scripture may have to say. True faith faces the facts of our circumstances and the facts of the promises of God in His word and chooses to handle the situations of life based on faith in Christ and in God's word.

Romans 4:22-25 - Genesis 15:6 tells us that Abraham's faith was credited to him for righteousness. This was recorded in God's word for our benefit and not just the benefit of Abraham. When we trust Christ for salvation, believing that God raised Him from the dead, we experience the same process that Abraham experienced. God imputes or credits our faith as righteousness. This faith is in Jesus Christ as delivered up by evil men by God's plan and permission (Acts 4:26-27) to take care of our sins by taking them away (John 1:29). This faith also includes the resurrection of Christ's physical body. Because justification is provided by Christ's blood and received by faith (Romans 5:1, 9), God raised Him up so that He would be able to intercede for us and keep our salvation secure (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34).

Romans 5:1 - This verse makes it very clear that the believer is justified by faith. Notice that there are no other requirements other than faith. The word "justify" in the Greek carries the idea that God declares and treats as righteous the guilty sinner who exercises faith in Christ. It does not mean to make righteous. Justification includes the crediting of Christ's righteousness to the believing sinner (Romans 4:3-5, 23-24) and the forgiveness of sins (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 4:6-8). In other words, it credits to us the good that we failed to do and cancels the bad that we did. The Greek uses what is called the aorist tense to let us know that our justification occurred once at a point of time. The result is that we are personally reconciled with God. We keep on having peace with God

through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. All believers have peace with God, but not all believers have the peace of God. We are commanded to let this peace rule in our hearts (Colossians 3:15) and to forsake worry, be specific in what we ask of God and being sure to thank Him for what He is already doing as well as what He will do (Philippians 4:6-7). Then God promises to guard our thoughts and emotions with His peace which surpasses complete understanding. The peace of God can also be disrupted by sin (Isaiah 48:18, 22). By confessing and forsaking this sin we can experience God's mercy and prospering (i.e. growth) in our lives (Proverbs 28:13). As we fall in love with God's word, we will experience great peace (Psalm 119:65).

Romans 5:2 - This verse is very clear. Grace is the provision of God. It is simply God's goodness that we do not deserve. The means of access is faith in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is our responsibility. While God aids our faith through the hearing of His word (Romans 10:17) and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-9), it is still our responsibility to exercise that faith. The idea of us standing in God's grace is that we stood in God's grace at a past point of time because we accessed it by faith with the result that we continue to possess this access. The Greek uses what is called the perfect tense on the word "stand" to support this point. This verse is a strong argument for the unconditional security of the one who has trusted Christ for salvation. Because of this we can keep on rejoicing in the expectation of sharing God's glory completely when we are made to be like Christ (1John 3:1-2) at His coming (Colossians 3:4). Whatever setbacks we may experience in our daily lives we can keep on rejoicing in light of God's promise because we know the story is going to have a happy ending beyond all dreams and expectations.

Romans 5:3-4 – It is difficult for us as believers to understand why God allows various sufferings in our lives and sometimes even promotes those sufferings. Our goal tends to rotate around being comfortable while God's goal for us is Christ-likeness. Sufferings or tribulations produce perseverance if we respond to them in a godly way. If we respond to them in an ungodly way then we just dig ourselves in deeper as did King Saul in the Old Testament. Perseverance is the ability to stay in fellowship with God by obedience, quick confession and forsaking of any sin that occurs and moving forward always with perfect obedience as the goal. While it will not be achieved in this life, we cannot be godly or spiritual without that

goal. Again we will miss it on different occasions. Then we quickly confess and forsake that sin. Perseverance then produces character or Christ-likeness. The more like Christ we are, the greater our hope. All of us believers have this certain and unmovable hope, but for the believer who is letting these sufferings benefit him by moving toward maturity, the magnitude of his hope or expectation is greater because of future reward. God and the things of God have a greater reality. We are told for these reasons to glory or rejoice in the sufferings of life. More than just saving faith, this requires faith in a Christ who knows where He is leading us even when we do not.

Romans 5:5 – There is no disappointment or shame associated with our future hope or expectation of Christ's return and what He will do for us. What God did for us at salvation when He gave us the Holy Spirit and what He did for us even before we were saved (*Romans 5:6-8*) should assure us of His great love for us. It is God's kind of love that has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is a love which is able to love other people and even enemies when they are still unlovable. Because of God's undertaking in the past we can face the future with confidence and help others to know where they can go for that confidence.

Romans 5:6-8 - These verses explain why our hope, i.e. our future, will not be disappointing as stated in *Romans 5:5*. The past undertakings of God through Christ make a clear case. When we lacked the strength to save ourselves or to please God, Christ died for the ungodly. This was necessary because God's wrath against all ungodliness continues to be revealed (*Romans 1:18*). The extent of the undertaking becomes clearer. By some chance, it would be difficult to locate someone who would die for a righteous person. Some people might consider dying for a good individual. However, God shows the extent of His love for us in that while we were still in our sins – and in no sense righteous or good - and doomed to hell, Christ died as a substitute for us. Finally, notice the timing of Christ's death for our sins. The phrase "in due time" shows that it was a time set by God the Father. In the same way our future with Christ at His return will come about in due time. The resurrection of Christ is the bridge that demonstrates the certainty of our justification (*Romans 4:25*) and the certainty of Christ returning as judge (*Acts 17:31*). What has happened in the past dealings of God is the best picture of what will happen in the future dealings of God.

Romans 5:9 - Our future (i.e. hope) is not going to be a disappointment according to Romans 5:5. In the present age in which we live, the blood of Christ provides our justification before God. This provision of justification is received by faith according to Romans 5:1. In both this verse and 5:1, this justification occurs at a fixed point of time for the believing sinner and that is the moment of faith. The Greek uses an aorist tense to emphasize this. Of course the provision occurred at a fixed point of time – the cross. God has already provided for our justification and given it to us as a gift. Both the provision and the reception of it are just a foretaste of why our future (i.e. hope) will not be disappointing. Because of present justification, we are promised salvation from the wrath of God. Our salvation is in three phases. We have saved by faith in Christ from the penalty of sin. We are presently being saved from the power of sin by trusting Christ's enablement through the Holy Spirit and direction through His word. We will be saved from the presence of sin and God's wrath at the return of Christ. This verse is a great one to show that our salvation cannot be lost once we receive it. Those who are presently justified are promised the future and final phase of salvation from God's wrath. That is definitely a reason to continue to rejoice and to persevere in our temporary problems.

Romans 5:10 - We continue to note that our future (i.e. hope) will not be disappointing (Romans 5:5). Christ provided reconciliation or peace for everyone when he died on the cross. At that point, because of our sin and its separating us from God, we were enemies of God. Then there was a point of time when we personally appropriated the reconciliation that Christ provided. According to Romans 5:1, this occurred at the moment we trusted Christ and were justified. God's undertaking to reconcile us provisionally at the cross and personally at the moment of faith in Christ is evidence that the promise concerning our future (i.e. hope) is secure. The promise is that Christ's life, i.e. His resurrection, guarantees that we will be saved from the wrath of God. Since verse 9 was speaking of the future aspect of our salvation in being saved from the presence of sin, we know that this also speaks of that aspect of salvation. This verse is also a strong argument for eternal security of the believer. Those who are presently reconciled are guaranteed that they will experience this future aspect of salvation. God wants us to know that we will not be disappointed.

Romans 5:11 – We conclude the section of Romans which explains why our future (i.e. hope) will not be disappointing (Romans 5:5). We are now

in possession of reconciliation because we have it through faith in Christ (Romans 5:1). The word translated “received” means to receive as a gift. We did not earn this because otherwise we could boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). Coupled with verse 10 this emphasizes the fact that those who are reconciled will experience the future aspect of salvation. This reconciliation is not just provisional but personal. Reconciliation was provided by Christ’s bloodshed death and becomes personal when we receive it by faith. Finally, we are able to rejoice or boast in God (cp. 1 Corinthians 1:31) through what Christ has done. To continue to have this joy, we must walk in fellowship with the Lord. We cannot lose the reconciliation but we can lose the joy (Psalm 51:12).

G. Christ's universal remedy for Adam's universal sin
(Romans 5:12-21)

Romans 5:12 – compare 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 - For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” (NKJV)

When Paul speaks of sin in the singular, most of the time he is speaking of our sinful nature or sinful inclination rather than of an act that disobeys God’s word. The sinful inclination or sinful nature (that all of us have) is the result of the sin of Adam. Notice that the word for “man” is masculine. Eve was deceived (1 Timothy 2:13-14), while Adam chose to sin deliberately. The result of us having a sinful nature is the death of the body. Here we see by comparing Romans 5:12 with 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 that physical death is in view. Because we have a sinful nature we are subject to death. The last phrase of this verse speaks not of personal sin or the sinful nature but imputed sin. All of us are counted as having participated in Adam’s sin. Personal sin results in spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1). Why are babies subject to physical death? The reason is very basic. They possess a sinful nature and Adam’s sin has been charged to them. They are not spiritually dead because they have not yet willfully and knowingly violated God’s commandments. The practical lesson that we learn from this verse is very profound. One sin can leave a very damaging legacy to the generations that follow us. Consider the marriage where one of the partners is unfaithful and brings in a sexually transmitted disease which is then passed on to their offspring. Before we think that the price of just one sin is cheap, we need to consider the cost not only to ourselves but to others.

Romans 5:13-14 – If I were to paraphrase this passage, it would read like this: “For until the law of Moses was given by God, sin was in the world, but sin against the law of Moses is not charged or imputed prior to the time it was in effect. The fact of physical death reigned from the time of Adam until the giving of the law by God through Moses. The people who had experienced physical death had not sinned like Adam did. Adam is a pattern of the one to come, i.e. Jesus Christ in that Adam brought sin and death and Christ brought righteousness and life.” Sin was definitely charged to people prior to the giving of the law of Moses because there was some type of law code in effect. During the time of Noah, it was the law of conscience (Genesis 3:22 cp. Romans 2:14-15; Genesis 6:5-8) and God brought judgment (Hebrews 11:7). Sodom and Gomorrah were involved in sexual sin and suffered the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 1:7). Judah’s two sons were judged by God for their sins in Genesis 38:7-10) and were judged by God in the form of divine discipline. The point is that there was some type of law code in existence prior to the giving of the law of Moses (Genesis 26:5). All of these suffered judgment for violation of known commandments of God whether known through a specific pre- Mosaic law code or the law of conscience. However, they were not charged for violation of the law code of Moses because it was not yet in existence. The rest of Romans 5 is devoted to the discussion of how Adam and Christ are alike in that one act on the part of both of them brought results for the entire human race.

Romans 5:15-16 – We see a comparison between Adam and Christ. Adam’s sin resulted in universal physical death. However, Christ’s one act of obedience in dying on the cross to pay for everyone’s sins provided God’s grace and the gift coming from that grace to everyone. This does not mean that everyone is saved because what God provides must be appropriated or received. Faith is the divinely appointed means by which His grace is received. Adam’s sin resulted in everyone being under God’s judgment while the gift provided by Christ’s sacrifice resulted in the provision of justification for everyone. We must understand the word “many” as referring to the many, i.e. all people. As we work our way through Romans 5:17-19, we will see that this contention holds up. We see Adam, the man who let Satan lead him from God’s perfect plan contrasted with Christ, the man who refused Satan’s plan for Him so He could carry out God’s perfect plan. We must ask ourselves whether we want to be carrying out God’s plan or yielding to Satan’s alternative plan – better known as sin.

Romans 5:17 - This verse lays to rest the argument that Christ's death means that no one will be lost and that everyone who ever lived will be saved. Here we see that Christ's work must be received. The results of the one act (the sin of eating the forbidden fruit) of Adam are compared to the one act (His bloodshed death as our substitute) of Christ. Adam's sin set up a reign of death. The results of Christ's one act are far superior to the results of Adam's act. According to this, the one who receives the gift of righteousness by faith (cp. Romans 4:3-5, 23-24) also receives an abundance of grace, i.e. God's goodness that he or she does not deserve. Not only does the believer receive as a gift the righteousness God requires at the moment of trusting Christ. The believer also receives the promise that he or she will reign in life through Christ. Life here refers to the future aspect of eternal life. We receive that future aspect when we are raised from the dead and/or are otherwise transformed at the second coming of Christ (Romans 8:11; Philippians 3:21). Revelation 20:6 explains that we will reign with Christ at that time. The present aspect of eternal life received at the moment we trust Christ for salvation (John 3:36; 5:24) assures us that we will receive the future aspect of eternal life ((John 6:37-40).

Romans 5:18-19 – We notice that Adam's sin brought judgment to all people with the result that all were condemned. Through Christ's righteous act of dying on the cross as our substitute the free gift came to all people. We appropriate the fact of being sinners, judgment and condemnation resulting from Adam's sin and disobedience through our first birth and we appropriate the reality of Christ's free gift which brings righteousness and justification through our second birth which happens when we trust Christ as Savior (John 1:12-13 cp. Romans 5:1; 4:23-24). Keep in mind that each of these truths concerning Christ's work are His provision for all people. Like any provision (e.g. water to drink, food to eat), they must be appropriated or received. When we rightly divide God's word on the truths of salvation, we will distinguish between the provision of Christ and the reception or appropriation of that provision. This keeps us from being misled by those who teach universalism (the false teaching that all people are automatically saved by the death and resurrection of Christ and that there is no need of any response on our part).

Romans 5:20-21 – The law was given so that sin would have the possibility of increasing which it did. To counter this, God's grace increased all the more. For these reasons the sinful nature reigned in bringing death, but in

addition to that, grace reigned through God making the righteousness that He required available to people through faith which also brought them eternal life. This was all accomplished through Jesus Christ. People have a choice to live under the reign of sin and experience death in all its forms: physical, spiritual and eternal. People also have another choice to let God's grace (His goodness that we have not earned or deserved) reign in our lives. When we plug into that grace by placing our trust in Jesus Christ, we have all the righteousness that we will ever need plus the free (to us) gift of eternal life. Because salvation is so free, this raises other questions which we will address in the next section of this study.

PART TWO: Salvation and Sin's Power (Romans Chapters 6-8)

A. Living our identity with Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-14)

Romans 6:1-2 - Since grace exceeded the sinful nature, the questions arises, do we need to continue in the sinful nature's activity so that grace might increase even more? When the word sin as a singular is used by Paul in the New Testament, it refers in many cases to the sinful nature. The short answer to the question is a resounding "No". God's word tells us that we died to sin. When we see the words death or die, the emphasis is on separation not extinction. The believer is stated to have died to (i.e. been separated from) the sinful nature in relation to its power and control. We are not separated from the sinful nature in relation to its presence. When Israel was delivered or separated from Egypt, they were separated from its power and control. Egypt continued to exist and exert its influence over the people of Israel. Because we are separated from the sinful nature's power and control we are able to live in a manner pleasing and honoring to God. However, because the sinful nature still exerts influence, we are still moved by and capable of sin. The choice is ours: Am I going to live in the past and let the sinful nature call the shots? Or, am I going to live in the present truth that I have been separated from the control and power of the sinful nature?

Romans 6:3-4 – *1 Corinthians 12:12-13* make it very clear that all believers have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. Since this is true of all believers, it must occur at the moment of salvation. Not only are we baptized into Christ but into His death as well. Later on, in *Colossians 2:11-12* we see that we share Christ's resurrection because of being

baptized by the Holy Spirit. This sharing of Christ's death and resurrection through Holy Spirit baptism makes it possible for us to walk or live our lives in the newness of Christ's resurrection life. This is done through the glory (all His goodness – Exodus 33:18-19, 22) of God the Father. Our water baptism by immersion is a picture of the real Spirit baptism joining us to Christ's death and resurrection that occurs when we trust Christ for salvation. Whether this possibility is realized in the life of us as believers or not depends on our choice. Are we going to walk in the way of the old life before Christ or are we doing to walk in the new way of our life in Christ. A good picture of this is loading a gun. It is not effective until it is fired. In the same way, God has loaded us with the Holy Spirit. The responsibility to let this power be unleashed is ours.

Romans 6:5-7 - The possibility of walking or living in the new way based on the new life we have in Christ is possible because we have been united to or baptized into Christ's death and therefore crucified with Christ. We who have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ all have had this experience of sharing Christ's death. Our sinful nature in our body has been made powerless because of this. There are two results. One is certain and that is that we will have a bodily resurrection like that of Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20-21). The second result is that we long have an obligation to no longer be slaves of sin. Whether we behave as slaves of the sinful nature or not is our choice and our responsibility. The reason this option is open to us is that we have been justified (i.e. declared or treated as righteous, The word "freed" is translated from the same Greek word as justified) from the sinful nature in our standing. Keep in mind that our sharing of Christ's death and crucifixion is not an extinction of our sinful nature but a separation from it so that while it is present, it is no longer predominant.

Romans 6:8-9 – The fact that we share Christ's death assures us that we will experience life with Him when we are bodily raised from the dead. The word "if" is a first class condition in the Greek and can easily be translated "since." The verse strongly supports the eternal security of the one who has trusted as Savior. These verses also establish the fact that Christ's resurrection from the dead is permanent. He is not going to die anymore because death no longer has control over Him. In the same way our resurrection will be like Christ's so that when we are bodily raised from the dead, we will have a body like His resurrection body so that we will not die again (Romans 8:11; Philippians 3:21). Death will no longer have control

over us either. We presently experience spiritual resurrection with Christ when we trust Him as Savior (Colossians 2:11-13; 3:1). We will see the implications of this as we continue our study.

Romans 6:10-11 – Christ not only died for our sins (plural) but to sin (i.e. our sinful natures or inclinations). His death for our sins frees us from the penalty or punishment for sin. His death to sin frees us from the power of sin. Christ did not stay dead but was raised from the dead so that He could continue to live for God. We share Christ's death because we were baptized into Christ's death and share Christ's life because we were baptized into His resurrection. For this reason, we are told to count ourselves dead to our sinful nature or sinful inclination. This does not mean that we are to regard it as extinct but that we are separated from it much like the people of Israel were separated from the power of Egypt at the Red Sea. Egypt did not cease to exist. Their power over Israel was broken but not their influence. We are to reckon or count ourselves dead to, i.e. separated from the power of our sinful nature. We are also to reckon or count ourselves alive to Christ. This enables us to live for Christ since Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20). This reckoning or counting on our part comes from a Greek word which means we are by faith to count these things as true even if they do not appear or feel true. We still have our sinful nature, but we have a new nature given to us by the Holy Spirit which not only directs us in the ways and thoughts of God but empowers us as well. Our job is to choose which nature we are going to let make our decisions

Romans 6:12-13 - The word "therefore" refers back to the fact that we have been separated from the dominance or control of our sinful nature because of Christ's work on the cross in dying to sin and His resurrection. The first command is to not let sin, i.e. the sinful nature rule in our body (which is subject to death anyway) so that we are obeying its desires instead of the new desires God gave us when we trusted Christ. The second command is that we quit continually yielding the parts of our body to the sinful nature as instruments to think and behave contrary to God's standards. The third command is to once and for all yield ourselves to God as those who are spiritually alive and to yield once and for all the parts of our body to God as instruments to think and behave in keeping with His standards. We refer to this once and for all commitment as consecration. In salvation God gives us all spiritual blessings in Christ. Consecration is the response of the grateful heart of a believer in giving God active ownership and control of all

our lives. When we receive Christ by faith as savior and Lord we receive life. He becomes our Lord in being our God. To recognize Him as God is to recognize Him as our supreme authority. In order for this to become a greater reality, sometime after salvation - the sooner, the better -, we are exhorted to surrender the controls of our lives to Christ so that we experience abundant life (John 10:10). Like marriage consecration is a decisive time of commitment but also like marriage it is lived out in full discipleship day by day (Luke 9:23). Why should I surrender my life to God? 1 Samuel 12:24 says it best, 1 Samuel 12:24 – *“Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.”* (NKJV)

Romans 6:14 – We concluded with the question of why we should yield ourselves completely to God. The reason given here is that we are under a new master rather than the old master, the sinful nature. The reason there has been a change of masters from the sinful nature to Christ is that we are not under the Old Testament law of Moses as the rule of life but under grace, i.e. the New Testament law of Christ as rule of life. Grace can refer to the grace that provides or keeps our salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9 cp. Romans 5:2), the grace by which we live the Christian life (James 4:6; Hebrews 4:16) or the grace to be received at Christ's second coming. When used as a contrast to the law as in John 1:17 and Galatians 5:4), it is synonymous with the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21) in contrast with the law of Moses (1 Corinthians 9:20). Under the law we primarily obey in order to enlist God's help whereas under grace we obey primarily because we already have God's help in the permanent presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit by whom Christ lives in us. God has given us a less restrictive law as a rule of life but has given us more responsibility and along with that the enablement to live this out to the glory of God. Remember that God's protection is best experienced when we choose to live under grace, i.e. the law of Christ rather than out from under it.

B. Living our identity as Christ's servant (Rom. 6:15-23)

Romans 6:15-18 – The question raised in verse 15 is different from the question raised in Romans 6:1. In Romans 6:1, the essential question was, is it okay for me to continue this pattern of sin so that grace may abound more. That question was answered with a resounding “No.” The question in verse 15 is different because it speaks of sinning occasionally rather than in a continuing pattern. In other words, it is okay for me to sin now and

then since I am no longer bound by the Old Testament law of Moses and am under grace, i.e. the New Testament law of Christ. The answer is again “No.” When we behaved in this way before salvation, we became slaves to sin, i.e. our sinful nature in our behavior which leads to spiritual death rather than the obedience needed for right-standing with God. We are to thank God that our standing changed when we trusted Christ for salvation. This meant that we were no longer slaves of the sinful nature in our standing before God. By becoming obedient to the teaching to which we were entrusted, we were freed from the power of the sin nature and became slaves of righteousness in our standing before God. This obedience to the gospel according to Romans 10:16 is to believe the message or report. It is not some kind of work or deed. Since we are slaves of righteousness, we are not to be dabbling in sin. We need to behave in keeping with our freed standing before God.

Romans 6:19-22 - Paul is using a human illustration because of their limited human understanding of spiritual truths. Prior to salvation, the individual yielded the parts of his body to sexual impurity and acting like there were no standards of right or wrong which only resulted in more of the same type of behavior. After having trusted Christ, we are to yield the parts of our body as slaves to righteous living, i.e. living by God’s standards which will result in sanctification (being set apart for God’s purpose in our conduct). Prior to salvation when we were slaves of the sinful nature, we were free in our own thinking from being concerned with living by God’s standards. We received absolutely no benefit from our pre-salvation sinful behaviors of which we are now ashamed. The outcome of those behaviors continued to be spiritual death. In contrast to this, we have been freed from the sinful nature and made slaves of God at the point we trusted Christ for salvation. The fruit (the word benefit is literally fruit) of this is holiness or sanctification and the immediate outcome is that we are possessors of eternal life. Paul has answered the question in Romans 6:15 with an explanation of how a change in their standing should translate into a change of behavior. In our discussion, we will sum up this discussion in the next verse.

Romans 6:23 – As believers we must remember that prior to our salvation, the wages which we earned living under the sin nature was spiritual death. The word “wages” shows that this was what we earned as due payment for how we were living. We may have been depraved in all sorts of awful sins or we may have been very religious and moral. Either way, we were living

under the rule of the sin nature. When we trusted Christ for salvation, we received eternal life as a free gift. This emphasizes that we did nothing to merit or earn eternal life. At the moment of faith, we were baptized into or placed into Christ where we received eternal life. This verse is very effective in showing the unsaved person that their sin has consequences. It is therefore inconsistent on our part as believers to choose to live under the sinful nature rather than live out and express the eternal life that we received as a free gift to do deeds that glorify God.

C. Freed from the Old Testament Law (Rom. 7:1-6)

Romans 7:1-6 – It is obvious that if a person dies that the Old Testament law code no longer has authority over the one who died. Paul uses the example of a being married. When a spouse dies, the law of marriage which prohibits adultery means that one is free to remarry without committing the sin of adultery. When we were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), we were dead to the Old Testament law of Moses because as we noted in Romans 6:3-4, we share Christ's death. This releases us from the Old Testament law of Moses in its entirety. This does not just mean the ceremonial law but the moral law as well. Romans 7:7 is an example of the law Paul is discussing and it includes the moral law as well. The precepts of the moral law, however, are repeated in their entirety in the New Testament with the exception of the Sabbath (Romans 14:4-6; Colossians 2:16-17). We died to and were separated from the Old Testament law so that we might belong to Christ. We serve in the new way of the Spirit. This is synonymous with the New Testament law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21), the commandments of Christ (Matthew 28:20), grace (John 1:17; Romans 6:14), the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3:1-11). We are under a new rule of life set forth in the New Testament rather than the old rule of life set forth in the Old Testament. This is illustrated by moving from one country (e.g. China) to another (e.g. the United States). We would be under a different law code although some of the specifics would remain such as prohibitions against stealing, murdering and rape. But there would be some things that would be different.

The new way of the Spirit which is the New Testament or New Covenant is a new rule of life for the believer. However, unlike the Old Testament law of Moses, the new way of the Spirit has the Holy Spirit working to empower (Acts 1:8), fill (Ephesians 5:18) and lead the believer (Galatians 5:18) to an

extent totally different from the Old Testament law of Moses. Prior to salvation, we lived under the rulership of the flesh or sinful nature which depended more on self-effort rather than the Holy Spirit. This resulted in bearing fruit for death. One of the reasons given here for God changing our rule of life was to make it possible for us to bear fruit for God.

While the last item noted here is not the central point of the passage, it sheds light on God's view of marriage, divorce and remarriage. As stated here and in Mark 10:11-12 marriage is a lifetime commitment between a man and a woman. The general rule is that if one of the spouses divorces and remarries, it is considered adultery. However, there are two exceptions to this general rule. Matthew 19:9 states that sexual unfaithfulness on the part of one spouse allows but does not require that the faithful spouse may divorce the unfaithful spouse and remarry another spouse. 1 Corinthians 7:15, 27-28 allows but does not require that if an unbelieving spouse leaves a believing spouse, the believing spouse may divorce the unbelieving spouse and marry another spouse. A third partial exception exists in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. If one leaves their spouse for any other reason than one of the two exceptions, they are to remain unmarried or be reconciled to their spouse. Other reasons might be such things as physical, financial abuse or involvement in illegal activity. Obviously as believers, we need to do all we can to add to the attractiveness of our marriage and not focus on what we are getting from our marriage relationship but on what we are giving to it. When unbelieving people see the fruit of attractive marriages in the lives of believers, they will be more interested in having the fruit tree (Christ) in their lives.

D. The Old Testament Law is not the problem (Rom. 7:7-14)

Romans 7:7-11 – The question that is under discussion is really, are we released from the Old Testament law of Moses because that law is sinful? Paul emphatically explains that the problem is not that the law is sinful. As a boy brought up in a Jewish environment Paul would not have begun to know what sin was had it not been for his knowledge of the Old Testament law of Moses and its presence in his life and upbringing. The command that really showed him his sin was the command against coveting. His sinful nature which is hostile to God and His law (Romans 8:7) took advantage of this opportunity and produced every kind of coveting in him. Apart from the Old Testament law of Moses the sin nature was dead, i.e. separated from him so that it lost its power. However, in the lives of

Gentiles (non-Jews), the law of conscience works the same way (Romans 2:14-15). Prior to his consciousness of what sin was, Paul and any other human being is alive spiritually. Once the knowledge of sin comes by the law, be it the Old Testament law of Moses (Romans 3:20), the law of conscience or in the present age the New Testament law of Christ, the sinful nature springs to full life and pushes us over the line by deceiving us and using the commandment to put us to death spiritually. His point is clear. The law shows us that we are spiritually dead, separated from God. Theoretically, we could be saved by keeping the law but since perfection is required, every human being other than Jesus Christ needs salvation provided in some other way and that is Christ Himself. So the law was and is not the problem. Our sinful nature and the sin it produced is the problem.

Romans 7:12-14 – As noted before, the problem of sinful behavior is not caused by the law but by indwelling sin. Keep in mind that when Paul uses the word “sin” in the singular, it refers to the sinful nature in us rather than an action or thought that disobeys God’s word. The law is said to be holy. This means that it was set apart for God’s purposes not for our purposes. It is also righteous meaning that it sets a standard of right and wrong. Thirdly, it is good or beneficial. God told the people of Israel - and by inference us today living under the law of Christ - that His commandments were for our good (Deuteronomy 10:13). The law did not bring about our spiritual death. Sin, i.e. the sinful nature in us did. The law did not cause the problem anymore than a thermometer causes it to be hot or cold. Like a thermometer, the law merely measured the fact that sin brought about our spiritual death and exposed the full extent of the evil of sin. Finally, not only is the law holy righteous and good, but it is spiritual. Its recording was brought about by the working and control of the Holy Spirit. The problem for Paul and for all believers is that we in ourselves are of flesh. We have that sinful inclination within us and we in ourselves are sold into bondage to our sinful natures. As believers, we have two inclinations. The stronger one is the fact that we are a new creation in Christ. The weaker one is the “I” life sold into bondage to sin. The law exposes the fact that our “I” life is what brought about our spiritual death prior to our salvation. Paul will explain in Romans 7:15-25, the frustrations and problems that come to the believer who chooses the “I” life rather than the “new life” to express his identity. We have the two inclinations. We have to decide which one is going to express itself in any given situation.

E. The struggle between our old sinful identity and our new identity in Christ (Rom. 7:15-25)

Romans 7:15-20 - The struggle between what we are in Christ and the struggle between what we were before we trusted Christ continues after we have trusted Him for salvation. It is hard to understand totally what we are doing when we sin as a believer. Instead of doing what we want to do as a Christian, we end up doing the sin we now hate to do as we did before we trusted Christ. We have to admit that if we as believers do the old sinful stuff we do not want to do, we agree that the law is good. We recognize that it is our sinful inclination moving us to do the act and not the new inclination we have as a believer. There is nothing good dwelling in our flesh, i.e. sinful nature. With our new inclination we desire to do what is good but find ourselves lacking the ability to carry out our new desires. The conflict rages on as we find ourselves with our new inclination not doing the good we want to but the evil we really do not want to do. We have to realize that we still have this sinful inclination living in us that moves us to do this. We find ourselves in this struggle at different points of our Christian life, but we learn as we walk in the Spirit to have fewer of these points where we express the sinful nature instead of who we are in Christ. This struggle does not end in Romans 8 as some Bible teachers try to promote. Rather it will end when Christ returns and we are like Him (1 John 3:2). This passage explains that we sin and the dynamics of that struggle. However, this passage does not give us a green light to give into the sin nature and its promptings in any situation (1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 John 2:1).

Romans 7:21-25 – As believers we soon discover after trusting Christ as savior that evil is present with us even though we have this strong desire to do good. The renewed inner man delights in the law of God. For the believer the law of God is not the law of Moses but the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:20-21). There is another law or principle working in the parts of our body which wars or struggles against the law of our minds which is our new nature or inclination. When this other law of sin is successful, it brings us under the law or principle of the sin nature. The question is, who is going to save us from our mortal body so that the sin nature does not get the upper hand anymore. We can thank through Jesus Christ that when Christ returns we will be saved from the presence of sin and no longer have this struggle (1 John 3:2). In the meantime we find ourselves as believers serving God's law with our renewed mind but at the same time we find

ourselves serving the law of sin with our sinful nature. In any situation the choice is ours. We can live according to our renewed mind in Christ, or we can live according to our sinful nature that we had before we trusted Christ. In Romans 8 we will see the useful and helpful role of the Holy Spirit in this struggle.

F. Freedom from condemnation allows us to live
for Christ by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1-4)

Romans 8:1-2 – A question is often raised by opponents of the eternal security of the believer. It states that when one commits a crime and then receives a pardon, he is free. However, if he goes out and commits another crime just like it or different, he is punished. They insist that God's law works in the same way as human law and that one forfeits his salvation the first time he sins after being saved. First of all when we trust Christ for salvation, the Holy Spirit baptizes us into Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:11-12). We are therefore said to be in Christ whereas prior to that we were outside of Christ. God's word clearly states that because we are now in Christ, there is no condemnation for us. The reason for this is explained in Romans 8:2. The believer has been set free from the law of sin and death. The law of sin and death is described in Romans 6:23 telling us that spiritual death is the consequence of sin. As believers, we have been freed from that consequence by the law of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who gave us spiritual life when we trusted Christ for salvation (John 6:63). The law of gravity holds us to the earth but the law of aerodynamics enables us to supersede that law so that gravity does not hold us to the earth. This having been set free is aorist tense in the Greek which speaks of an act that took place at a point time we trusted Christ for salvation. As can be seen, Romans 8:2 clearly shows that once a believer is in a state of no condemnation from God's law that he no longer can be in such a state again.

Romans 8:3-4 – Why was the law of the life-giving Holy Spirit mentioned in Romans 8:2 necessary to deliver us from the law of sin and death as summarized in Romans 6:23? This passage answers that question. The law was unable to justify us in that justification by works of the law requires absolute perfection. It was far too weak because it depended on the basic nature of people which is sinful and corrupt. For this reason, God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful people (although Christ was not sinful – 1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 4:16) to be an offering for sin so that sin in the flesh was

actually judged at the cross. The purpose of this relates to how we choose to live the Christian life. The purpose of Christ condemning or judging sin in the flesh was so that it would be possible (Note the word “might”) for the requirement of the law to be fulfilled in the lives of believers who live their lives based on the leading and control of the Holy Spirit rather than the leading and prompting of the old sin nature. The requirement of the law is summarized in Romans 13:8-10 which is to love our fellow-human beings as much as we love ourselves. The choice is to walk in harmony with the Holy Spirit and see this fulfilled in the way we live or to walk in harmony with our old sinful natures and fail to see this fulfilled. Notice two things in this: (1) The Holy Spirit supplies the enablement that is needed and (2) The believer is responsible to choose how he or she is going to live his or her life in any given situation. As the old saying goes, this puts the ball in our court.

G. The product of the Holy Spirit's absence in the unsaved (Rom. 8:5-8)

Romans 8:5-8 – The reason that it is important for believers to walk or live their lives based on the leading and control of the Holy Spirit is shown by comparing the standing and the consequences of the unsaved individual with the standing and consequences of the spiritual believer. Those who are in harmony with the sinful nature, i.e. unbelievers, set their mind on the things of the sinful nature. On the other hand, those who are in harmony with the Holy Spirit set their minds on the things of the Holy Spirit. The mindset of the unbeliever which is upon the sinful nature as a general characteristic brings about spiritual death or separation from God. On the other hand, the mind set on the leading and control of the Holy Spirit brings life when Christ is trusted for salvation and the peace with God that it brings. The mind of the unbeliever set on the sinful nature is hostile toward God and needs to be reconciled to God. Three things are true of the unbeliever because his mind is set on the flesh or sinful nature: (1) The mind of the unbeliever does not subject itself to God’s law, (2) The mind of the unbeliever lacks the capacity to obey God’s law and (3) The unbeliever because he is in the flesh, i.e. under the ongoing domination of his sinful nature lacks the capacity to please God. He is contrasted with those in Romans 8:9 who are in the Spirit and who have the indwelling Holy Spirit. We will see how this passage has a secondary application to the carnal believer.

As we have seen, this passage compares the relationship sustained to the Holy Spirit by the spiritual believer with the relationship sustained by the unbeliever to the flesh or sinful nature. The carnal believer is not according to the flesh in His standing. He, however, can walk or live his life based on the flesh or sinful nature. The carnal believer is according to the Spirit but does not walk or live his life according to the Spirit and so fails to consistently have his mind set on the things of the Spirit. When the carnal believer sets his mind on the flesh or sinful nature, it does not bring about spiritual death as in the case of the unbeliever. It does bring about a loss of fellowship (not salvation) with God. When the carnal believer fails to set his mind on the things of the Spirit, he fails to enjoy the spiritual life that he has as a Christian. While he has peace with God, he does not have the peace of God in his life. When the carnal believer chooses to set his mind on the things of the flesh he finds himself at enmity with God in his practice (James 4:4) even though he is not at enmity with God in his position (Romans 5:1,10-11). When a carnal believer sets his mind on the flesh or sinful nature, he is not being subject to God's word or law and lacks the Holy Spirit's power to obey. He also fails to please God which should always be our aim as believers (2 Corinthians 5:9).

H. The indwelling Holy Spirit's work in the life of the believer (Rom. 8:9-17)

Romans 8:9-10 - The believer in contrast to the unbeliever is in the Spirit. Even the carnal believer is in the Spirit. The spiritual believer walks in the Spirit, but the carnal believer walks in the flesh even though he is not in the flesh with relation to his standing. The key point is that the Spirit of God, i.e. the Holy Spirit indwells the true believer. The word "if" is a first class condition and should be understood by the translation "since." Anyone lacking the Spirit of Christ, i.e. the Holy Spirit does not belong to Christ. If (better "since") Christ is in the believer through the indwelling Holy Spirit, we need to understand that the body is dead (subject to physical death) because of indwelling sin, i.e. the sinful nature yet the human spirit of the believer is alive because the righteousness of Christ was credited to the believer. Some teach that unbelievers do not have a human spirit because it is said that they are spiritually dead, i.e. their human spirit is dead. However, God's word teaches that all people have a human spirit (Numbers 16:22; 27:16) whether they are saved or lost. However, the unbeliever even though he possesses a human spirit, that spirit is dead meaning not that it is non-existent but meaning that it is separated from

God. When one trusts Christ for salvation the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life to our human spirit so that it is no longer separated from God. Jesus said in John 3:6, “Whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Beware of any group that teaches that people may be believers and not have the Holy Spirit but this passage along with Galatians 3:26 cp. 4:6 shows that they are in error.

Romans 8:11-12 – The Greek construction shows that the word “if” can be translated “since.” What this is saying is that since the Spirit who proceeds from God dwells in us right now that the same God through the Holy Spirit will give life to our mortal bodies in the future when we are raised at the return of Jesus. Notice that this will be a bodily resurrection not just one of the soul and spirit. Our bodies are mortal now meaning that they are subject to death. If any believer is living when Christ returns, their mortal body will be made immortal (cp. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53). This is also a strong argument for the eternal security of the believer. If we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit now, God will see that we are raised through that same Holy Spirit in the future. The practical application of this truth is that our debt or obligation to God is to not keep on living our lives based on the sinful nature, which is how we were living before we trusted Christ as savior. In short the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit is to help us avoid living in the same pattern as we did prior to salvation.

Romans 8:13 – How we usually live our lives shows whether we have really trusted Christ or not. People who usually choose to live under the control of the old sinful nature show that they are spiritually dying. On the other hand, those who with the Spirit’s help are usually separating the deeds of the sinful nature done through the body from their lives will live spiritually. Choosing as the usual pattern to live under the control of the sinful nature is not the way a person becomes lost. It is simply the outcome of a life that has failed to trust Christ for salvation. By the same token, the usual practice of separating the deeds of the body from their lives does not bring us eternal life. It simply demonstrates whether or not we genuinely trusted Christ as Savior. One of the important points that we see in the matter of our progressive sanctification is that we are responsible for putting off the deeds of the sinful nature. We also see that the Holy Spirit has a responsibility to empower us in this process. So we see that it is not a matter of us doing everything, nor is it a matter of sitting back and the Holy Spirit doing it all. Both we as believers and the Holy Spirit are involved.

Obviously, the degree to which believers involve themselves determines how much they will put off sin and experience growth in Christ-likeness.

Romans 8:14 – We have seen the relation of the Holy Spirit to the genuine believer. One of the marks of a genuine believer is that they are led by the Holy Spirit. This includes the carnal believer. However, this does not mean that the carnal believer is following the leading of the Holy Spirit on a consistent basis. The leading of the Holy Spirit is primarily through the word of God. However, there are situations and areas of life where the Holy Spirit leads the believer that are not totally defined by scripture. For example, the young believer who is trying to determine which college God would have him attend. Another example would be whether a believer who moves to another town and church should or should not do a certain ministry. The best way to determine the leading of the Holy Spirit is to look at the impressions of our mind. If the impressions of our mind consistently lead us away from a certain ministry or certain type of ministry would be the leading of the Holy Spirit so long as those impressions do not conflict with God's word. Impressions that are of a come-and-go nature or erratic nature would not be the leading of the Holy Spirit because God is unchanging. One does not feel called to be a carpenter one day, a missionary the next day and a pilot the next day. The leading of the Holy Spirit is fixed and consistent as is God's word. Finally, we notice that as believers, we are not just children of God but adult sons of God. This means that we have full privileges in the family of God unlike non-adult children. This comparison is set forth in Galatians 4:1-6. Under the law of Moses our fellowship was restricted by the sacrificial and tabernacle/temple system whereas under the law of Christ our fellowship is mediated solely by Christ. As believers with full rights of adult sons in God's family, we are being led by the Holy Spirit. The question is: are we following the Leader?

Romans 8:15 - The Holy Spirit is not like a spirit or angel of Satan who would put us into bondage of fear. He makes effective the fact that we have been redeemed or set free from the demands of the Old Testament law so that we have full rights as adult sons in God's family (Galatians 4:4-6). Satan was strongly involved in this bondage prior to our salvation (Hebrews 2:14-15). However, Christ's death so disabled Satan that we no longer are in bondage to the fear of death. This is our standing before God. It is important that we live out this standing in our practice. The term "adoption" is a very interesting one. It does not carry the meaning that we give it in our culture where one is born in one family and adopted by

another family. In a Hebrew family when a son was born, he was considered a child without full privileges with the status of a servant. Later on there was a private ceremony in which the boy child was made an adult son. This was followed later by a public ceremony confirming him being made an adult son in the family. The moment we trust Christ as savior corresponds to the private ceremony (Galatians 3:26; 4:5-6) and the time when Christ returns and we receive our resurrection body corresponds to the public ceremony (Romans 8:23). Because we are adult sons – regardless of whether we are male or female - , we have a specially close relationship with God as our Father. As God's sons, are we reflecting God's holiness and love to a needy world or are we reflecting the world to a church that needs less of the world and more of Christ?

Romans 8:16 - "The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God's children" (NET). I have included the NET translation of this verse because I believe, it best translates it. "Testify to" is a much better understanding and these Greek words are used only in Revelation 22:18 in the New Testament. These verse has been used by a lot of touchy-feely Christians to promote the idea that the Holy Spirit and your human spirit both testify that you really are God's child. First of all, we must understand that the testimony of the Holy Spirit must always line up with scripture. Moreover, a great deal of the time, the Holy Spirit's main communication and testimony is through scripture. In this case the Holy Spirit testifies to those who are really believers in their innermost being. He testifies here in scripture in Romans 8:13-14 to those who usually put to death the deeds of the flesh and are being led by the Spirit. His testimony is that they are truly God's children. It His working in their lives that bears that testimony. It is also interesting to note that this verse lays to rest the error that people are without a spirit until the Holy Spirit comes and lives in them at salvation. In that understanding, there is no such thing as a human spirit. There is only the Holy Spirit. I actually sat under the teaching of a pastor of a large Bible-believing church who promoted this teaching. This verse clearly shows that the Holy Spirit and the believer's human spirit are distinct. The next time we feel unsaved, we must turn to God's word and let the Holy Spirit testify through it to assure us of our salvation (1 John 5:13) and dismiss our feelings (Jeremiah 17:9).

I. The future deliverance of the believer
and creation (Rom. 8:17-25)

Romans 8:17 – Both of the words “if” in this verse are first class condition and can well be translated by the word “since”. Those of us who have trusted Christ have the Spirit’s witness in our lives shown by changed behavior and attitudes according to the previous verses that show we are children of God. This means that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. There are two aspects to our heirship. One is the fact that we are heirs because of our relationship to God through our union or connection with Jesus Christ by saving faith. This part of our inheritance is secure. The second aspect of our inheritance is based on our behavior rather than our belief. This has to do with rewards and requires perseverance on our part. The second aspect of our inheritance is not in view in this verse. The verse goes on after pointing out that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ to point out that we will suffer with Him in this life. We have been appointed for suffering according to 1 Thessalonians 3:3. The great news is that we will be glorified together with Christ (1 John 3:2; Romans 8:29-30; Colossians 3:4). So we see that there is privilege, there is pain and finally there is perfection. As the old hymn says, “It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.”

Romans 8:18 – This verse continues the thoughts of verse 17 before it. Because we are children of God and therefore heirs, we share Christ’s sufferings and His glory. No one likes the idea, not to mention the reality, of sufferings and problems. However, we must keep in mind that these problems are only realities for the present time. Our life is not always going to be like this. There is a vast eternity awaiting the believer. If we die before Christ’s second coming, we are absent from the body and present with the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8). When Christ returns we appear with Him in all this glory (Colossians 3:4). Once we leave this present life, there is no more suffering for the believer other than possible suffering of lost rewards (not salvation) at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). We will behold the glory that the Father has given Christ (John 17:24). This includes the fact that this glory will include the coming earthly kingdom of 1000 years in our new bodies plus the eternal state beyond this, which speaks of a place where we will experience no more sorrow, pain, suffering or death (Revelation 21:3-4). This puts all the difficulties that we face now in perspective. What is a 100 years (at maximum) of the worst circumstances we could ever face compared to tens

of thousands of years with the greatest circumstances of what we could ever dream. Even then, there is no end in sight because it will be forever. The word "consider" comes from a Greek word which means to count or consider something true because it is true not because it feels true or looks true. This requires that we live by faith in the promises of God rather than the premises of man.

Romans 8:19-21 - The whole issue of sufferings that are caused by the fall of people and also creation with it are discussed. Everything in creation is awaiting the time that those of us who are sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26) will be revealed. 1 John 3:1 makes it clear that we are presently sons of God but we are not recognized by the world as being different from any other human being. 1 John 3:2 tells us that our future likeness has not yet appeared but when Christ comes that we will be like Him. In the meantime, creation along with us suffers with the futility or meaninglessness of the present life cycle. This subjection of the creation including us to the bondage of decay was God's choice not ours or any part of the creation. However, the whole creation awaits this wonderful time with the expectation that it will be freed from the bondage to decay along with us who are believers. When Christ died on the cross, His death provided reconciliation for all things on earth and in the universe (Colossians 1:20). When Christ returns the curse on creation will be relieved but not removed during His 1000 year earthly kingdom (Ezekiel 47:8-11; Isaiah 65:20), and then in the eternal state which follows, the curse will be removed totally for the redeemed and for creation (Revelation 22:3). The only exception will be those consigned to the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8; 14:10-11).

Romans 8:22-23 - Everywhere around us, we see the suffering, decay and death that occur in the present creation. It may be road kill or one predator killing another in the animal kingdom. These sufferings are compared to the pains of childbirth. Like a mother about to give delivery, there are pains for something new to be brought forth. That new is the relief and then the removal of the curse. Even we as believers, who have the Holy Spirit as a first fruits offering that promises greater things to come, are suffering as we eagerly await the future aspect of our redemption. Present suffering is designed to help us anticipate the future God has designed for us. As we noted before, the term adoption is not about being born in one family and raised in another. It has to do with us being given the full rights of being an adult son of God. In the Jewish family a male child was like a slave and

then this ceremony of being adopted, i.e. being given full rights as a son was done. There are two ceremonies. The first one which is private corresponds to our adoption at the time we trust Christ as savior (Galatians 3:26; 4:4-6; Romans 8:15). The second one was public and corresponds to the future aspect of our being adopted when we also receive the future aspect of our redemption. This is the redemption of our body. When Christ returns, those believers who have died will be raised with new bodies and those believers who have not died will have their bodies instantly changed so that both have bodies like the resurrection body of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:51-53; Philippians 3:21). Knowing that our present bodies, subject to decay and death, are going to be replaced by bodies not subject to decay or death helps to deal with the losses and the ups and downs of life.

Romans 8:24-25 – We must understand the word hope in the New Testament carries a stronger meaning than it does in our everyday conversation. It speaks of a future expectation for the believer with regard to certain events. Paul explains that it is because of this future expectation of our bodily redemption and the relief and removal of the curse on creation that we were saved at a time in the past (the moment we trusted Christ). If this future expectation were visible right now, it would no longer be a future expectation. After all, no one has a future expectation concerning events that he already is seeing. However, our future expectation is built on what we do not see. The word “if” is a first class condition in the Greek which can be translated by the word “since.” In other words since we have this future expectation concerning what we do not see (i.e. our new body, the restored creation), we persevere in eagerly awaiting it. This brings us through the ups and downs of now living in a fallen and unpredictable world because we are holding the course in looking forward to an unfallen and predictable world.

J. The believer's security and purpose in the midst of suffering (Rom. 8:26-39)

Romans 8:26-27 – We, as believers, are weak in our present situation of living in a fallen world that is also hostile to Christ and His followers. The Holy Spirit helps our weakness and inadequacy. He does this in situations where we are at a loss for words and do not know how to pray as we should. We are told that the Holy Spirit intercedes or prays for us with groanings too deep for us to come up with any words. There is a possibility that many experiences where people believe that they are speaking in

tongues are situations where the person was at a loss for words and made meaningless noises which have nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. Then the Holy Spirit intercedes or prays for them in an inaudible way. The effectiveness of the Holy Spirit's intercession lies in the fact that Christ who searches the hearts knows the mind of the Holy Spirit. The effectiveness of the Holy Spirit's intercession or praying for us lies in the fact that He prays for us in harmony with God's will. The next time that we are at a loss for words, we should remember that the Holy Spirit is interceding for us to help us. We are not on our own in facing a fallen world.

Romans 8:28 - After discussing our sufferings and the work of the Holy Spirit to help us cope and overcome, we see that God is at work in still other ways. The first question is, who are those who love God. We know that sometimes the phrase "those who love God" means the same as those who have placed their faith in Christ as in James 2:5; 1 Peter 1:7-8 and 1 Corinthians 2:9 cp. 2:10-12. Other times it refers to believers who persevere under trials as in James 1:12 and obeying God's commandments as in 1 John 5:2-3. For this reason, people differ on the understanding of this verse. However, it appears that the verse itself gives us the clue as to what this phrase means. The ones who love God in this verse are the ones who are called according to God's purpose. This calling is what the believer responds to when he places his faith in Christ according to Romans 8:29-30 and 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14. For this reason, the better understanding of the phrase "those who love God" in this verse would be a synonym for believers. The promise for the believer is that God works in all the problems and provisions of life to cause all things to work together for the good or benefit of that believer. All things would include those things that are pleasant, unpleasant or simply routine. Like a cake that is composed of good tasting and awful tasting ingredients, the events of the believer's life are worked together for his benefit. In summary, this is one of the assurances of the Christian life. Notice that it says, we know that God causes all things to work together for good. The next time we face difficulties and disappointments, we need to rest on this promise that God will work this together with the other events for some good and glorious purpose that includes our good as well.

Romans 8:29 – God has a purpose and a plan. This is the reason that He can work all things – pleasant or unpleasant- together for our good. This speaks of those whom God foreknew. This is talking about foreknowledge of the person and obviously would include any foreknowledge of their free-

will decisions. In Jeremiah 1:5 God tells Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." God has a relationship with believers prior to their birth. However, foreknowledge includes more than the existence of this prior relationship. God knows all about the different possibilities of decisions we will or even could make under different circumstances. Some people who overemphasize God's sovereignty and underemphasize people's responsibility to believe only consider the prior relationship aspect of foreknowledge and rule out that it would involve prior knowledge of people's decisions on God's part as well. In any case God foreknows believers and their decisions. These same people that God foreknows (us as believers), God predestines to become conformed to the image or likeness of Jesus Christ, His Son. Notice, it does not say that God predestined our decision to trust Christ. He obviously foreknew that. He simply predestines us to be conformed to Christ's likeness. This is a lifelong process that is not complete until Jesus returns (1 John 3:2). In the family of God, Jesus is head or leader of the family of God because He has been assigned the position of firstborn among those of us who are the brethren. In building on Romans 8:28, we can see that God works all things together for good for us so that we will be more and more conformed to the likeness of Christ. Our cooperation with God in this process reduces the amount of adverse events although it does not eliminate them.

Romans 8:30 - This verse completes a chain that begins in Romans 8:29. Believers are foreknown relationally and in regard to actual and potential choices by God. These same believers are predestined to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. Then those who are predestined for this are also called. The calling comes through the gospel message (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). It is needful to point out an error often made at this point often made by those who overemphasize God's sovereignty and underemphasize the personal responsibility of people to believe. The calling of God is also to many of those who are not foreknown and who are not predestined to be conformed to Christ's likeness as shown in Matthew 22:13-14. In other words, all people who are foreknown and predestined to be conformed to Christ's likeness are called through the gospel. However, not all people who are called through the gospel are foreknown and predestined to be conformed to Christ's likeness. Those among the foreknown and predestined are called and then when they place their faith in Christ, they are justified (Romans 5:1). It is at this point that their salvation becomes actual or real. The calling is the responsibility of God

and the people whom He commissioned. The responsibility to believe is the one who hears this call through the gospel. The chain finishes with the fact that the ones that God justifies will also be glorified. God speaks of the glorification of those of us who have trusted Christ and been justified in the past tense to emphasize the certainty of this future event spoken of in Colossians 3:4; 1 Corinthians 15:43 and 1 John 3:2). If we have trusted Christ as Savior and by doing so been justified, we know that we are in the chain of events in God's plan and can look forward with great expectation and anticipation when we shall be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Romans 8:31-32 – These things refer to the chain of actions undertaken by God on behalf of us as believers in foreknowing us, predestining us to Christ-likeness, calling us, justifying us and glorifying us. These undertakings by God are stated not only to assure us of the security of our salvation but to excite in us a sense of awe toward God and all that He has done and promised. The word “if” is a first class condition in the Greek and can well be translated “since”. So since God shows Himself for us in having undertaken all these things for us, who can be effectively against us. To be sure, we face the opposition of the world in which we live (John 15:18-21) as well as Satan (1 Peter 5:8-9) and his angels, i.e. demons (Ephesians 6:11-12). The point of this verse is: what can all this opposition be in the face of a God who has already undertaken so much on our behalf? Not only that, God loved us so much that He did not spare His own Son but delivered Him over for us all into the hands of sinful and wicked men who conspired and worked together (Matthew 20:18-19; Acts 4:26-27) to nail Him to the cross to die in our place (2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:6). Considering that God sacrificed His Son and because He has undertaken all things in 8:29-30 on our behalf, can there be any doubt that He will fail to freely give us all things in the future as He has promised in His word (1 Corinthians 3:21-22; 2 Corinthians 6:10). The obvious answer is a resounding “no”. God will not fail. The present may be unraveling and falling apart for us as believers, but the best by far is yet to come. Our God is truly an awesome God!

Romans 8:33 - To add Paul goes on explaining why everything is going to obviously turn out well in the end even though the present life may have more downs than ups. To our discouragement, there are believers who are confused about the eternal security of the true believer in Christ. They believe that we can somehow do something that puts us under God's

condemnation again. The question is asked, who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones, i.e. believers? God is not going to be the one to do so. After all, God is the one who justifies, literally, "keeps on justifying," us as believers. Since God keeps on justifying us as believers, no one can bring a charge that will stick. The reason that God can remain just and continue to justify us rests in the fact that His Son Jesus Christ was the propitiation for our sins so that God could continue to be righteous in this role of being just and justifier of the believer (read Romans 3:25-26 carefully). This word "propitiation" simply means that God's justice was satisfied by the sacrifice of Christ. Since God continues to justify us, in the future no charge will be brought against us as believers. We believers are not going to go through the rough and tumble of this life only to be told that we slipped up and didn't make it.

Romans 8:34 - Paul continues to show why we are eternally secure in our salvation. There may be times of great success and triumph in our lives and times when everything seems to be going wrong. Yet our salvation is secured by the fact that God keeps on justifying us, i.e. declaring and treating us as without charge before Him. God the Father has delegated all judgment to Christ according to John 5:22, 27. The obvious answer to the question of who is going to condemn the believer to Hell is no one, not even Christ. The reason for this is 3-fold. First of all, Christ died for us as believers and we have appropriated the benefits of that death by faith (Matthew 26:28 cp. Acts 10:43). Secondly, Christ was raised for us on account of our justification (Romans 4:25). His resurrection means that we will likewise be raised to the resurrection of life (Romans 8:11). Thirdly, and finally Christ is at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. This is the place of authority. There His work is to intercede, i.e. pray, for us who are believers. John 17:11-12 is a good pattern of Jesus' intercessory work. We note that no one was lost of those for whom He prayed except the son of perdition (Judas, who was never saved to begin with - John 6:64, 70-71). It is clear that the believer does not face a judgment of condemnation at any possible point in his future based on the promises of God in John 5:24; Romans 8:1, 33-34. Rather than using His authority to condemn us, Christ is using His authority for our benefit so that our faith - though it may falter - will not fail (Luke 22:31-32).

Romans 8:35 - In addition to all that God has undertaken for us in His unbroken plan to save us, to give us all things in the future and keep our salvation secure from being lost again, the love of Christ remains a

constant. This is special love that He has for all those who have trusted Him as savior because we are told in Romans 8:39 that it is the love that God has for us because we are in Christ. We face trouble simply because we live in a fallen world subject to decay and decline. Yet no matter how much these multiply, Christ's love for us remains a constant. He is able to turn cursing into eventual blessing (Deuteronomy 23:5) because of His great love for us. Distress where we feel the pressure of conflicting priorities and demands coupled with the lack of means to handle them does not separate us from God's love. Persecution whether minor (Luke 6:22) or major (Revelation 2:10; Hebrews 10:34; 2 Corinthians 11:24-25) may make us feel isolated but does not change the reality of Christ's love for us. Lack of food and clothing is not the normal situation of the believer (Matthew 6:33) but may occur in times of upheaval and adversity. Christ in His love uses these to bring forth our faith to greater levels (2 Cor. 11:27; Hebrews 11:37-39) and to help us to learn contentment in all circumstances (Philippians 4:11-13). At one time or another, we all face dangers of various kinds. The fact that we are in one dangerous situation after another does not mean that Christ has ceased to love us. He is still present (Matthew 28:20). Finally war and adverse treatment by those in authority does not mean Christ's love is gone because of all the uncertainty. Like Paul we are not alone even if the most trusted people in our lives abandon us (2 Timothy 4:16-17). Lack of being separated from Christ's love is a reality because it is promised by God not because we can see or feel it.

Romans 8:36-37 – Despite the fact that we as believers have so much going for us because of the past planning and work, the present work and future promises of God and of Christ, we are viewed much differently by the people of this world. The believer's sufferings are often referred to as death as in 1 Corinthians 15:31; 2 Corinthians 4:10-11; Philippians 3:10. To the world, the willingness of believers to stand for Christ in the face of suffering seems meaningless and foolish. We are like so many sheep being led to the slaughter. Yet there is hope and a future for us because from God's standpoint – and that standpoint will prevail in due time – we are more than conquerors and overcomers through Christ who loved us so much. So we are losers without value as far as the world is concerned but great victors as far as God is concerned. All of this is through Christ and not of ourselves through that same love from which we cannot be separated according to Romans 8:35, 38-39.

Romans 8:38-39 - The summary point of the discussion in Romans 8 regarding God's provisions and promises in the face of our sufferings and difficulties as believers begins as a statement of assurance. We have assurance that God works all things together for our good in Romans 8:28. Here we have assurance that there is absolutely nothing that can separate us as believers from that special love of God that He has for us because we are in Christ. Just because some event in our life results in our death does not mean that we lose God's love. No event of life will cause us to lose it. The angels and kingdoms of angels working together whether they are good or bad cannot cause us to lose it. No power at work in the universe can cause us to lose it. There is nothing happening now or in the future that can cause us to lose it. There is no distance above us or below us that can deprive us of it. In fact no created thing (obviously including ourselves) can cause us to be separated from this special love that is ours because we are in Christ. These verses offer both assurance of salvation, i.e. knowing that we have salvation, and security of salvation, i.e. the fact that we cannot lose that salvation. In view of this we can face whatever life hands us with the confidence that what God has put in place will secure us.

PART THREE: Salvation and Israel (Romans Chapters 9-11)

A. Israel's privilege and past as God's chosen people (Romans 9:1-30)

Romans 9:1-3 - These verses explain the concern of Paul for his people the Jews. They were brothers in a physical sense and in a covenant sense but they were not brothers spiritually. His communication of his concern was absolutely true. He emphasizes that this is the case by noting that he is speaking the truth in Christ and not lying. His conscience also supports the reality and truthfulness of his concern for his fellow-Jews. Finally, he notes that the Holy Spirit also testifies to the truthfulness of his expressed concern. It is important that the leading of the Holy Spirit and our conscience line up together to guide us. That is why we must make every effort to maintain a good conscience (Acts 24:16). His sorrow concerning their lost condition along with his ongoing anguish penetrates to his very heart and thinking. He almost wishes he could be sent to hell so that his fellow-Jews would not have to be. We must ask ourselves. Are we willing to face the fact that many people we know – even those who profess to have trusted Christ but in reality have not – are comfortably in many cases

on their way to hell? If we lack a heart for the lost, we need to pray that God would give us such a heart.

Romans 9:4-5 - Paul lists some of the privileges and advantages of Israel which should have prepared them to receive their Messiah instead of rejecting Him as a nation (John 1:11). As a nation they were adopted to be God's son (Exodus 4:22). This father/son relationship was a covenant relationship and not a spiritual relationship as in John 1:12 and Galatians 3:26). The dwelling of the Shechinah glory in their midst was unique to Israel. This was the cloud that guided them by day and the pillar of fire that guided them by night. The glory of God filled the tabernacle and later on the temple. This presence of God in their midst was meant to guide them to holy living and devotion to God, but unfortunately the people chose to go their own way instead of God's way. Today the Holy Spirit indwells each individual believer (1 Corinthians 6:19) and indwells believers in a collective sense (1 Corinthians 3:16). 1 Peter 4:14 refers to Him as the Spirit of glory. Individually, believers are sons of God and children of God (Galatians 3:26; John 1:12). Privileges do not always translate into holy and godly living. We must take care not to squander our privileges like Israel but to use them to the glory of God. We will continue looking at the privileges and advantages of Israel.

The third privilege and advantage of Israel was the covenants. The covenant with Abraham was unique to Israel. It promised that Israel would be a great nation, blessing for him, a great name, make him a blessing, promotion and protection of God in blessing those who blessed him and cursing those who curse him. Finally, all families of the earth were blessed because of him in the sending of the Messiah. There was also the Land (traditionally Palestinian) covenant in Deuteronomy 29; 30 which set forth the promise of the land to the people of Israel although disobedience would delay but not defeat the fulfillment of this covenant. This Land covenant was separate from the Old Covenant of Moses made at Horeb (or Sinai) according to Deuteronomy 29:1. In addition there was the covenant with David which is set forth in 2 Samuel 7:12-16. The main features were an everlasting throne which Christ will occupy (Luke 1:31-33) at His second coming (Matthew 25:31 cp. Isaiah 9:6-7). At that point the kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom. Also David will never lack a man to sit upon David's throne (Jeremiah 33:17). There is also the Old Covenant (also known as the covenant with Moses or the law). This was established at Mt. Sinai/Horeb. Finally, Israel was promised a New Covenant in Jeremiah

31:31-34. This was provided by the death of Christ (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:16-18) at which point it was implemented. Individual Jews and Gentiles do participate in it even now (2 Corinthians 3:6-11) but Israel as a nation will not participate in it until they turn to Christ (Romans 11:25-27) at His second coming. The Old Covenant was been set aside and is no longer in force (Hebrews 7:18; 8:13; 2 Corinthians 3:11). Israel's failure to respond in faith to her Messiah delayed but has not defeated the fulfillment of these covenants. We must remember that our sin may delay and diminish the outworking of God's plans for us, but it will not ultimately defeat them.

The fourth privilege and advantage of Israel was the giving of the law. Psalm 147:19-20 tells us that no other nation was given the law and that the nations did not know his ordinances. Rather than using the law as a vehicle to guide them in righteous living, they used it as a means of salvation turning the message of salvation into a works based message rather than a faith based message (Romans 9:30-33). The temple service provided a means for establishing and regaining fellowship of a sinful people with a holy God. Unfortunately, the people squandered it by ignoring it, turning it into a form of idol worship at times and mere form of going through the motions at other times. In addition to the covenants there were numerous promises to the nation. Jeremiah 31:35-37 guaranteed the perpetuity of the nation of Israel. Jeremiah 33:17-20 guaranteed the perpetuity of the line of David and the descendents of the Levites. Ezekiel 37:20-28 promises the restoration of Israel as a nation never again to be disbursed. The ancestors, i.e. fathers or patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were theirs. Everyone who is descended from all three not just one of the three is one of God's chosen people Israel. Most important from them came the humanity of the promised Savior. Not only that, the promised Savior is Himself God and to be praised forever. With all these privileges and advantages and still rejecting their Messiah as a nation, it is no wonder the depth of sorrow of Paul had concerning their lostness. We all know people who have had many spiritual advantages but have squandered them and failed to trust Christ. To whom much is given, much is expected (Luke 12:48).

Romans 9:6-9 - It is very clear that the failure of Israel is not because God has failed to be faithful to His word. The issue is this. Not everyone who is physically descended from Jacob, i.e. Israel are Jacob or Israel in a

spiritual sense. By looking at the life of Abraham we see that it was not merely an issue of physical descent. The promise was that his offspring would be counted on the basis of God's promise not on the basis of physical descent. The promise of God concerning the salvation offered to Israel was by faith not by performance. (Romans 4:13). Abraham's offspring who are both physical and spiritual come through Jacob or Israel. Those who are merely spiritual come through non – Jewish/Gentiles who have been justified by faith (Galatians 3:6-9 29). As we can see faith in Christ is the issue for salvation.

Roman 9:10-13 - The issue under discussion has been the fact that salvation is not based on our physical birth line but our spiritual birth line. In verses 6-9 the argument was that one's salvation relationship to God was based on God's promise rather than one's physical birth line. This promise meant that salvation was received by faith so that it would be by grace, i.e. God's goodness that we do not deserve (Romans 4:16). In vv. 10-13 the argument is developed that the salvation relationship is not by our works or deeds and not even by the fact that God foresees our works and deeds. It is clearly stated that our salvation relationship with God is matter of His choice or election. Some believers who overemphasize God's sovereignty and underestimate people's responsibility to believe the gospel have expanded this statement to mean that God does not save based on foreseen faith, but that is overuse of this verse. It simply states that foreseen works are not the basis of our salvation relationship with God. While God's election of believers is prior to creation (Ephesians 1:4), it is clearly based on foreknowledge (1 Peter 1:1-2). God also predicted the older one, Esau, to serve his brother Jacob. We will now examine the issue of God's love for Jacob and hatred for Esau.

The question arises, what does it mean that God loved Jacob but hated Esau. The words love and hate are used in two senses in scripture. The sense in which they are used and with which we are familiar has to do with concern for God or for others or lack of concern for God or for others. In 1 John 3:14-18 this kind of love toward fellow-believers is described. It is also clear that to fail to help a fellow-believer who has a genuine need when you have the resources to do so would be a form of hate. However, there is another way that the words love and hate are used. Matthew 6:24 illustrates that principle when it points out that no one can serve two masters. If we try to do so, we will love one and hate the other. This speaks of our primary preference when it talks about love. It is also used

this way in Luke 14:26 when Jesus said, *“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple (NKJV) .”* Jesus was not teaching hatred for father or mother, wife, kids or siblings. He was teaching that our primary preference is for Christ while our less than primary preferences would be the other relationships. This second concept of love is brought out very clearly in Genesis 29:30-31 where the KJV translates the words very exactly. *“And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.”* Notice very carefully that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. He loved them both but loved Rachel more. In the next verse sentence, it states that Leah was hated. Jacob’s love for Leah was not primary but secondary. When we have this understanding of this second concept of love, we see the meaning of the phrase, “Jacob I have loved {i.e. preferred} and Esau I have hated {i.e. not preferred}”. As far as concern goes, God loves everyone (John 3:16) and so loved Esau in the sense of being concerned about him.

Romans 9:14-15 - The question that presents itself concerning the fact that God chooses one and does not choose another mean that He is somehow unrighteous? God makes this choice before people make their choice. This does not mean that God’s election is somehow a rigged election. People are chosen but free to make their own choice. God obviously foreknows what choice people are going to make and His election or choice is consistent or in harmony with their choice. As noted before, God’s election is based on or at least in agreement with His foreknowledge (1 Peter 1:1-2). In any case God cannot be said to be unrighteous as scripture clearly states that God is upright and there is no unrighteousness with Him (Psalm 92:15). All of God’s ways are justice without any injustice and He is righteous and upright (Deuteronomy 32:4). God has mercy and compassion on whomever He wills or chooses to have mercy and compassion. What this is saying is that this provision of mercy and compassion is received based on God’s criteria not anyone else’s criteria. God’s criteria for receiving mercy is faith in Christ (Acts 10:43). What this verse is not saying is that God arbitrarily looks down upon people and decides whether or not He is going to let them trust Christ to receive that mercy. The criteria for receiving mercy belong to God but the responsibility to receive it or reject it rests with the human being

Romans 9:16 – This verse often puzzles many and often leads people to false conclusions regarding its meaning. It is obvious that salvation is not received by doing something. We know from other verses that it is received by faith alone apart from works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:28; 4:5). This answers the issue of why salvation is not of him who runs. What does it mean that salvation is not of him who wills? To answer this, we must rightly divide God's word (2 Timothy 2:15). First of all God's will not man's will decides how salvation will be provided (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36). Secondly God's will not man's will decides what benefits will be given to the one who trusts Christ (John 1:12-13, e.g. being born of God to become God's spiritual child). Thirdly, God's will not man's will decides on what terms salvation will be offered to people (Romans 9:16 – our passage under consideration). However, man's will decides whether or not he will receive or reject God's provision for salvation and the means of receiving it (Revelation 22:17; John 5:40). I believe that the discussion on this verse and the references cited will help greatly in dealing with those who overemphasize God's sovereignty and underemphasize man's responsibility and dealing with those who overemphasize man's responsibility and who underemphasize God's sovereignty.

Romans 9:17 – God's right to set the conditions for which salvation is received extends to his right to deal with the unsaved in a manner that many people use to malign and attempt to discredit the God of the Bible. Unfortunately, these people do not understand that God functions on His terms and not theirs. They have a conception of what God should be like, and this conception runs contrary to God's self-disclosure of Himself set forth in scripture. People want to be accepted as they are, but they do not want to accept God as He is. This verse is not saying that Pharaoh was born for this purpose. It is saying that He was raised up to His position of authority by God. We may ask the reason that God raised up a man to a position of authority who treated the people of Israel so harshly and unreasonably. God revealed two of those reasons in this verse. The first reason that God raised this despicable man indifferent to the true God (Exodus 5:2) to his position of authority was to show the power of God. God knew from the beginning what an obstinate man Pharaoh was. By the time God got through with Pharaoh, this man had received a thorough course is just how powerful God is. One only needs to read the accounts of the judgments which fell upon Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt to see the power of God on display. This culminated in Pharaoh and his army

being drowned in the Red Sea (Psalm 136:15). The second reason that God placed Pharaoh in authority was so that His name, i.e. reputation, would be declared in all the earth (see Exodus 18:1 and Joshua 2:9-11 for examples). This communication concerning God's reputation brought at least one person to salvation (Hebrews 11:31). The lesson for us is this. God places people in authority: parents, bosses at work, policemen and other government officials. They may or may not do what is right. When they fail to do so, it presents an opportunity for God's power to be on display in some unexplainable ways and for His reputation to be communicated. We can, as Moses and Aaron, cooperate with God's working in such situations by obeying His word, or we can hinder his purposes by making choices that show disobedience to His word.

Romans 9:18 - Pharaoh is an example of one whom God chose to harden. The word "therefore" refers to the reason that God hardens some people to the truth of His word to show His power and promote His reputation. Pharaoh was obviously a very stubborn man indifferent to the reality of the true God and unconcerned about people. There was a prediction that his heart would be hardened in Exodus 4:21 but it never came to pass until at least Exodus 7:13-14. His hardness of heart showed up in the fact that he greatly increased the severity of the labor of the Hebrew servants in Exodus chapter 5 and that he was totally indifferent to the miracle of Aaron whose rod turned into a snake and swallowed the snakes which came from the rods of the Egyptian magicians. When people continually reject the light of God's word and the light of God's working, many times God judicially blinds and hardens the person so that he cannot believe. Notice the example of the nature of the unbelief in Christ in John 12:37-40. It started out with many people choosing not to believe despite repeatedly seeing the miraculous working of God's power in vv. 37-38. Because of this willful hardening, God judicially blinded or hardened them to the point that they lacked the power or ability to believe. God hardens whom He wills, but He does not do so arbitrarily and capriciously from the start. God wills to harden those who have had considerable light and refused to respond in faith. Other examples are found in Luke 10:10-15. We must never make the determination that someone has come to that point. Our job as believers is to communicate the gospel. Rather than harping strictly on what if you were to die tonight or Jesus is coming tonight, it would be well to warn hearers that there is a danger that after repeated warnings from God that they may come to the point where they cannot believe (Proverbs 29:1). Unsaved people who are worried that they have come to

the point that they cannot believe have not yet been hardened to that point, or they would have no concern at all. God, not those of us who share the gospel, knows when it is too late. For this reason, keep giving out the good news of the gospel. .

Romans 9:19-21 - The question is that if God raises up evil men to positions of authority to show His power and to promote His reputation or name, why is it – since this is part of His will and plan – find fault? After all, who has resisted God's absolute will. God warns us not to find fault with Him in this. God's will includes His sovereignty in picking people who are only too willing to play the role of villain in this world. God did not make these people to be villains. God's will includes giving people choices and freedom to accept or reject salvation and after salvation to reject His leading. God uses every individual including their free choices to carry out His purposes. Depending on their choices, these purposes may be anything from the permission of some awful acts or some of the greatest of God's purposes. As we look at the illustration that follows, we see that God is like a potter who makes vessels for honor and some for dishonor. The choice of whether one is a vessel of honor or dishonor lies with the individual. Those who overemphasize God's sovereignty and underemphasize man's responsibility often overlook this. However, 2 Timothy 2:21 shows that people in their choices determine whether they are a vessel of honor or dishonor. Moreover, if we go back to the illustration of the potter in Jeremiah 18:1-11 from which this illustration in Romans was taken, we see clearly that God's sovereignty as the potter also allows for Him to be responsive to people's choices. To be sure there are points of God's will which place firm limits and boundaries on the choices of people. There are other points of God's will where people are free to choose. The fact that God has included the permission of evil in His plan is not completely explained in scripture as to the reasons for doing so. God is responsible for permitting evil but not responsible for enacting it. God is not accountable to us for all the intricacies of His will, but we may rest in confidence that the judge of all the earth will do right (Genesis 18:25).

Romans 9:22-24 - It is clear that God makes people and that He knows how they are going to behave and how they are going to choose. He makes some for honor and some for dishonor. The choice to make us is God's. The choice to be a vessel of honor or dishonor is ours. The choice of what to do in response to our choice is God's. The word "if" in Romans 9:22 could well be translated "since". God wants to show His wrath at

some point so that people know that there really are consequences to rejecting Him. God also wants people to know His power. Yet despite these desires, God has endured the vessels of wrath, i.e. the same as dishonor, with great patience. The period of patience is now. 2 Peter 3:9 states that the reason for this patience is that God does not desire for anyone to perish in Hell. God is patient with the unsaved so that people may clearly see his goodness and change their hardened heart. These people under condemnation have been prepared for destruction in Hell. The wrath of God hangs over them like a sword ready to descend at a moment's notice (John 3:36). They are already under condemnation (John 3:18). God has two plans. One is for those prepared for destruction and the other is for those prepared for glory. God has given people the privilege of deciding which plan they want to be in (John 3:18, 36). This passage in Romans deals with God's part of this equation. In due time, God will make fully known His wrath and His power (2 Thessalonians 1:9). We will see how the second part of this passage explains more fully the purpose of God presently showing patience and waiting to fully show His wrath and power.

We have seen that since God wants to show His wrath and make His power known at some future point and that, in the meantime He has endured the unsaved with great patience. His further purpose in bringing judgment on the unsaved is to make known to all creation the riches of His glory on the saved who are referred to here as vessels of mercy and vessels of honor in 2 Timothy 2:21. God's glory is shown to be all His goodness according to Exodus 33:18-19, 22.

Just how rich or great all of God's goodness is, will be shown when Christ returns. We notice that God has prepared believers beforehand to share in the glory of Christ which we will do when Christ returns (Colossians 3:4). God foreknew those who trusted Christ and predestined them to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). To make sure that we do not miss understanding who the vessels of mercy are, they are described as those whom God called from among both the Jews and the Gentiles. This call came through the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). When we responded in faith to the call we were justified (Romans 5:1). According to 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, this call results in our being on track to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. At that time we will arrive because we will be like Christ (1 John 3:2).

Romans 9:25-26 – God has called people not just from the Jews but also from the Gentiles. When we read the verses from Hosea that are cited in Romans 9:25-26, we notice that God is saying to the Jewish people in Hosea 2:23 that He would call them His people who were before not His people because of their unfaithfulness. He also would tell the Jews whom He had said were not His people that they are sons of the living God. Paul's point is that God is going to apply the same manner of dealing with the Gentiles as He will with wayward Jews. The first word "as" is very critical in understanding Romans 9:25-26. Again, what this is saying is that just as God said the apostate Jews were not God's people but would someday be God's people, so God applied the same manner of dealing with the Gentiles. So the inclusion of the Gentiles as God's people was not a fulfillment of the verses in Hosea but was an illustration of God's manner of dealing with the Jews. The literal fulfillment of the verses in Hosea will be the restoration of Israel as a nation to God.

Romans 9:27-29 - One of the first points that we see with reference to the final salvation of Israel as a nation is that only a remnant will be saved. We know there will be a coming 7 year tribulation between the time of the rapture of the church age believers and the return of Christ with them to set up His 1000 year earthly kingdom. During that time only 1/3 of the Jews living in Israel will be saved according to Zechariah 13:8-9. According to Ezekiel 20:33-38, we also know that God will regather the Jewish people who are living abroad, i.e. outside of Israel, judge them and purge out any rebels. On this group, we are not given any specific numbers or percentages. When God carries out His sentence of judgment at Christ's return, it will be done very quickly and will not be undone. If God had not left Israel descendents in His previous judgments such as the Babylonian captivity and the Roman dispersions in 70 A.D., they would have ended up like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. One of the principles that occurs with Israel also occurs within the professing church. The majority of those professing allegiance to God and to Christ are counterfeit. There is only a small remnant that are actually genuine believers (Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23). When we understand that one point, our understanding of the Bible and how it works out in real life takes a significant leap forward.

B. Israel's present is contrary to faith in Christ

Romans 9:30-33 - Even though, the Messiah Jesus Christ came to Israel first, they rejected Him. He offered them the righteousness that God requires by simply placing their faith in Him. The vast majority of the people ended up saying "no" to Jesus. They were bent on producing the righteousness that God requires by obeying the Old Testament laws along with all the rabbinic additions. The people, who were not Jewish, i.e. the Gentiles, did not pursue the righteousness that God requires for salvation. When the issue of sin and its judgment, the solution for it in Christ's substitutionary and bloodshed death and the means of receiving the solution by trusting Christ, was presented to them, a great number (but not a majority - Mt. 7:13-14) of the Gentiles trusted Christ for salvation. The Gentiles accepted a faith salvation while the Jews pursued a works salvation. The Jews failed precisely because they pursued salvation by trying to do enough works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone who is Jesus Christ Himself by seeing salvation as the need to do something rather than to believe in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing this, they fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 28:16 of the fact that the Messiah as a stumbling stone would be presented in Jerusalem and that the one who believes in Him (not the one who keeps all the rules perfectly) would not experience the shame of eternal judgment. If we do not get anything out of this passage other than the fact that it is faith in Christ that saves and not our good or best deeds, we will have grasped the main point that God has tried to communicate to the Jewish people and to us who have trusted Christ.

Romans 10:1 – We continue to look at Paul's concern for Israel and by inference God's concern for Israel as a nation. We who have trusted Christ for salvation all have concerns for lost people and especially certain ones who are close to us. Evangelism starts with a desire to see specific people saved. Notice that Paul had that kind of desire. The next step involves praying for lost people. This answers the question of what Paul did concerning his desire to see Israel saved. He prayed for their salvation. There are pastors who tell their people to just go out and tell people the gospel. They say that scripture does not teach that we need to pray for lost people to be saved. I am not sure what they do with Romans 10:1. That is good that they urge their people to share but without a desire and prayer on our part, many of our efforts will be without effect. I would add that our efforts to help people come to Christ for salvation must not stop with a

desire on our part to see them saved and prayer for their salvation. We must follow through and share the gospel with them. Faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God according to Romans 10:17. We must open our mouths after we take this step and present the gospel. The desire and prayer on our part secures the help of the Holy Spirit in empowering and filling us to present the message and in preparing the heart of the unsaved person to hear it and receive it.

Romans 10:2 - The problem with most of the people of Israel and almost all their leaders was that they were seeking to gain salvation by their works rather than receiving it as a free gift. It is very clear that these people were sincere. However, their sincerity was not based on knowledge concerning how salvation was provided and received. There are those who teach that if one is sincere, God will honor that sincerity. Proverbs 14:12 states, *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."* Notice that people may believe that a certain way to be saved is right. However, God's word warns that sincerity alone is not enough. Jesus Christ stated that the way is narrow that leads to life and that the way that leads to destruction is broad in Matthew 7:13-14. Jesus plainly stated in John 14:6 that no one comes to God the Father except by Him. Jesus stated in John 8:24 that unless one believes in Him that they will die in their sins. Philippians 3:4-6 explains that Paul was a sincere and upright religious man but was sincerely wrong. Zeal for God or sincerity toward Him is necessary, but it is also necessary that zeal or sincerity be according to correct information.

Romans 10:3 - The problem of the nation of Israel and the Jewish people at large is that they lack the knowledge of God's righteousness. This problem also exists in churches that are loaded with counterfeit Christians who have a form of godliness but say "no" to its power in their lives (2 Timothy 3:5). Many people mistakenly believe that God's righteousness is a relative matter. They believe if one's good deeds are more than their misdeeds that they will somehow be okay with God. Israel's error and the error of counterfeit Christianity is trying to establish a way to attain to the righteousness God requires by a system of works or rule keeping. Yet all our righteous deeds are nothing more than filthy rags in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6). Manmade righteousness is totally inadequate to measure up to God's perfect righteousness. God's righteousness is a perfect righteousness. Anyone who has committed even one sin lacks that righteousness (James 2:10). God is said to be absolutely perfect (Matthew

5:48) and states that perfection is the standard for all people. According to Psalm 92:15, God has no unrighteousness. According to Romans 3:10, there is no one who is righteous enough to meet that standard. Mark 10:18 also supports that contention. The solution lies in submitting to the righteousness of God. This is done by being convinced that we have blown it. We are bankrupt before a totally holy and righteous God. There are no amount of good works that we could ever do that would bring us up to God's required standard of righteousness. For this reason God has made a way for us to receive the righteousness that He requires. Jesus Christ lived a sinless life (1 Peter 2:22). He died on the cross and became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21) so that in Christ we have the righteousness required because Christ's righteousness is charged to our account (1 Corinthians 1:30) and all our sins are forgiven (Colossians 2:13) when we trust Christ for salvation (Romans 4:3-5; 23-24; Acts 10:43). This is the way that we submit to God's righteousness.

Romans 10:4 – As we have noted, the efforts of the nation of Israel to be saved by rule-keeping are absolutely futile. The same holds true for counterfeit Christians who are busily working for salvation as some type of reward instead of submitting to God's righteousness by placing their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. There are people outside of professing Christianity who are caught in the same trap. They falsely tell themselves and others that if we do a good job of keeping the rules that we will have the righteousness required by God. There are many people who simply live by the rules of their conscience (Romans 2:14-15). The law simply tells us how good we have to be in order to receive salvation. It does not give us the means to receive this goodness or righteousness. Christ is the end of the law of Moses or any other law code (Galatians 3:21) for attaining the righteousness God requires. Notice the only requirement is to believe, i.e. trust. It is simply to believe. This is true of everyone – the most moral of people to the sorriest pieces of humanity. Our job is to present the gospel so that people know who (i.e. Christ) they are believing or trusting and what do they need to believe concerning this who (i.e. Christ) in order to be saved. Believe is the only requirement for salvation – nothing more and nothing less.

Romans 10:5 – The Old Testament law required total obedience in order for one to receive eternal life. This was also true of any other law system that God could have instituted according to Galatians 3:21. Salvation by keeping the Old Testament law or any other system of law would be

salvation by works. Salvation prior to the law (Genesis 15:6 cp. Romans 4:1-5) and under the law (Habakkuk 2:3-4 cp. Romans 1:16-17) was by faith. The law simply set the standard for salvation. It could not justify anyone in God's sight. It could only give the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20). That is why the previous verse Romans 10:4 explains that Christ is the end of the law for everyone who believes. Galatians 3:10-13 explains the outworking of trying to be saved by obeying the law of Moses or any law system for that matter. It is very clear that the would-be law keeper is under a curse (Galatians 3:10). A curse is simply a sentence of judgment. However, we see in Galatians 3:11 that the would-be law keeper cannot be justified in God's sight because Romans 1:17 which refers to Habakkuk 2:3-4 states that the just shall live by faith (i.e. receive eternal life) by faith. There can be no mixture of law and faith. They are opposed to one another (Galatians 3:12). According to Galatians 3:13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. This means that He paid the price to set us free from the curse (=sentence of judgment) of the law. The Greek word for "redeemed" also includes the concept that He removed us from again being under that curse which shows that we are eternally secure the moment that we trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was actually made a curse for us. This means that He took our sentence of judgment for us. The law can show us that we are sinners in need of a savior but it cannot impart or give us that salvation.

Romans 10:6-8 – These verses are an applicational paraphrase of Deuteronomy 30:12-14 with some explanatory phrases given to Paul. The Holy Spirit who inspired the writings of both the Old and New Testament is free to paraphrase what He authored just as a human author can paraphrase what he has authored. Christ is substituted in Romans 10:6-8 for the word "commandment" in Deuteronomy 30:12-14. The righteousness required by God which is received by faith speaks in this paraphrased comment as follows. The Jewish people did not have to ascend to heaven to bring Christ down at the incarnation. God sent Christ Himself just like He sent the law Himself to Moses. The Jewish people did not have to do anything to bring Christ back from the dead because God did that. Just as the law was near the Jewish people in their mouths and their hearts, the word of faith preached which Paul and the other believers presented was in their hearts (i.e. they knew it), it was in their mouths (they could tell others what it was). Finally this word was near them being presented by Christ and those who heard Him. As we will see in Romans 10:9-10, all they had to do was place their faith in Christ.

Romans 10:9-11 - In my research most of the commentators bypassed the issue of whether confession was required for salvation from the penalty of sin. The late Joe Temple in his study notes online faced this issue head on. In Romans 10:10 where it states "With the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Joe Temple explained that the idea of the Greek word was that one believes in relation to righteousness and one confesses in relation to salvation. The relationship between believing and righteousness is not precisely the same as confessing is to salvation. Believing accesses the righteousness that God requires for salvation and confession results from salvation. The website at Middleton Bible Church expressed the same conclusion but like other commentators failed to explain how they got to that conclusion. As a variant to Joe Temple's thoughts on this passage. I noted that the word "unto" was translated by the Greek word "eis" which is translated "at" in the sense of "because of" in Matthew 12:41. The Greek word "eis" like our English word "for" can be used in two senses. I went to the store for bread, i.e. to obtain bread. He went to jail for robbery, i.e. because of robbery. So Romans 10:10 could be understood to say, that one believes because of righteousness and confesses because of salvation. In other words we place our trust in Christ because that is how sufficient righteousness is received from God as a gift, and we confess Christ as Lord or God because of the salvation that we received. Personally, I prefer this second explanation. Some commentators believe that the power of sin is in view rather than the penalty of sin, but if we read Romans 9:30-33 and 10:1-8 which lead into this passage plus the verses that follow in Romans 10:13-17 we see that salvation from sin's penalty is in view. Confessing Jesus as Lord simply means confessing Him as God. The verse that follows 10:9-10 which is 10:11 has a paraphrase from the Old Testament where "Whosoever believeth on him" refers to the LORD, i.e. Jehovah or Yahweh. Several other things that we note from this verse is that faith in Christ's resurrection from the dead is an important part of saving faith. We are promised that if we place our trust in Christ, we will not experience the shame of condemnation.

To confess Jesus as Lord is to sincerely acknowledge and agree with God that Jesus is Lord or God. The Greek word for "confess" means to "acknowledge or say the same thing." To accept Christ as Lord or as God means that there is a sincere recognition that Christ is the final source of authority in the believer's life. To define any god as less than the final

source of authority would mean that the so-called god is not a god to the one who professes it to be a god.

However, we must recognize that Jesus as God being the final source of authority in our lives does not mean that we are yielded in all respects. We accepted Him as Lord at salvation, but it is not yet fully activated and actualized. Otherwise, there would be no need for spiritual growth. There would be no need for the Roman believers who had already trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation to decisively yield their bodies to Christ in Rom. 12:1-2. Peter would not have had to tell the believers in 1 Peter 3:15 to set apart Christ as Lord in their hearts. In addition, Jesus was Lord of the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 1:2) who had some glaring evidences of unyieldedness (1 Cor. 3:1-4).

On the other hand, we must avoid the error of omitting Christ being Lord from the salvation appeal. In Acts 16:31, the Philippian jailor was told to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. Col. 2:6 states that Jesus had been received as Lord. Here in Rom. 10:9-10, the same thought is stated. It is sad that there has been much confusion on this issue because many Bible believers have not stated it so accurately. If one is trying to lead someone to Christ, it is important that the unsaved person trusts Jesus' work (His sinless life, substitutionary bloodshed death, bodily resurrection) and His person (He is God in the sense of being the final authority in their lives).

Romans 10:12-13 – This verse reinforces the idea that calling on the name of the LORD Jesus is calling on Jehovah or Yahweh. This shows that Jesus is Jehovah or Yahweh. It also helps us interpret the meaning of Lord in Romans 10:9 to mean God. The quote in Romans 10:13 is from Joel 2:32 which uses Jehovah or Yahweh for God. The calling on the Lord Jesus Christ as God for salvation is done by some people as an expression of faith. In fact it is the faith which actually receives the salvation (compare Romans 10:13 with 10:14 and consider that 150 references in the New Testament require faith alone in Christ alone for salvation and that one crosses from death to life at the moment of faith). The calling is simply an expression or demonstration of that faith. I had a Sunday School teacher who once told his class that one cannot be saved unless they ask Jesus for that salvation. He used this verse as his proof text. Being a new Christian, I was somewhat baffled by this statement but with later study realized the error of what he was saying. Christ makes no distinction among ethnic or

religious groups but is rich to every individual who calls on Him. Keep in mind that one cannot meaningfully call on the Lord Jesus unless one has trusted Christ according to Romans 10:13-14. This richness is in showing mercy and grace (Ephesians 2:4-7). Mercy is God withholding the judgment we deserve and grace is giving salvation as a free gift which we do not deserve.

Romans 10:14-15 – As noted in our previous meditation, one cannot call on the Lord and be saved unless they have actually believed in the Lord for salvation. This passage outlines the role of believers and the church in sending forth missionaries and evangelists. People cannot believe unless they hear God's word (see Romans 10:17). They cannot hear God's word, specifically the gospel, without someone preaching or telling that message to them. People cannot preach or tell that message without being sent. In one sense all of us as believers have been sent by the Lord (John 20:21). In the missionary work sense the church sends the one who preaches or tells the message (Acts 13:3). The Old Testament in Isaiah 52:7 is cited to reinforce the teaching regarding God's viewpoint of those who preach or tell others the good news. The reference to the feet indicates that we must be purposeful in telling others the gospel. It is with the feet that we go to those in need of this saving message. These verses serve two purposes in the lives of those who have trusted Christ for salvation. We are to tell others, and we are to be involved in sending forth people to the mission field. On our part, this requires prayer (Colossians 4:3-4; Ephesians 6:19-20) and financial support (Philippians 4:14-18).

Romans 10:16 - We have been discussing the whole issue of the gospel and the need for faith on the part of Israel and all people as well to receive the benefits of it. From time to time in the New Testament, we see the concept of obeying the gospel. What does this mean? What is the nature of the obedience spoken of in this verse. The key to understanding what it means to obey the gospel is found in the quote from Isaiah 53:1. To obey the gospel is to believe the report God has given concerning His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, when the Philippian jailor asked what he needed to do to be saved, he was commanded to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He had a choice: obey the command by believing or to disobey the command by continuing in his unbelief (Acts 16:30-31). In summary, we obey the gospel by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ apart from any works for salvation from the penalty of sin. We disobey the gospel by failing to trust Christ or by trying to add some work to it. Keep in mind the

gospel is the message that salvation is provided by Christ's death for our sins and His bodily resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1, 3-4) and that this provision is received by faith (Romans 1:16). Other than believing, i.e. trusting, in Christ, there is no other act required to obey the gospel.

Romans 10:17 - Paul had described in vv. 13-15 the process for missionary and evangelistic activity among the lost. He had come back to the fact that Israel in particular and Gentiles by implication had not obeyed the gospel by placing their faith in Christ. Here he sums it all up with a very important point. Faith is based on hearing God's word. This is a very important principle. We can use argumentation all day long with the unsaved but it is God's word that must bring about saving faith. We can reason but we must reason from the scriptures according to Acts 17:2. Hearing God's word does not mean that people will respond in faith (Hebrews 4:2), but it is impossible to respond in faith if we do not hear God's word. God's word is the sword of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) which He uses to bring conviction to the unsaved person of the need to trust Christ for salvation (John 16:8-9). The same process works for our spiritual growth after salvation. Hearing God's word increases our faith. If we fail to hear God's word, our faith will not grow. As a result the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives will be quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19). I run into Christians who fail to attend church and find that they fail to do this basic fundamental. Then they wonder why they feel cold toward the things of God and things do not work out in their lives because they lack the faith. We received the Holy Spirit by faith in Christ Ephesians (1:13-14) and we continue this after salvation (Galatians 3:1-5). We walk by the Spirit as we hear God's word and have faith in that word which points us to Christ (Galatians 5:16 cp. 2:20 cp. Colossians 2:6). The working of the Holy Spirit in our lives makes it much easier to live the Christian life just as a sharp ax works better than a dull one.

Romans 10:18 -19 - Keep in mind that the context of Romans chapters 9 through 11 is dealing with the lostness of Israel and the fact that they as a nation (with the exception of a small minority of Jews) rejected their Messiah or Christ. The context leading up to this verse deals with the fact that the people of Israel (mentioned in Romans 10:16) had not obeyed the gospel by believing it. The question is raised if they have heard. Paul cites several forms of evidence to demonstrate that God has truly revealed Himself to the Jewish people. Psalm 19:4 which is cited above explains that the Jewish people have had the witness of God's message

demonstrated through creation. In fact the message of creation has not only gone to the Jewish people but to all of humanity. The word sound is translated by some as “voice”. Creation testifies of the existence of God according to Romans 1:19-20. Belief in God is not enough to save according to James 2:19. However, it is enough to clue people in to the fact that since God exists, He must have some type of will. It is enough to realize that God is very smart as witnessed by the complexity and variety of creation and very powerful as witnessed by the forces at work in His creation. The fact that this creation runs in such an orderly manner tells everyone that God is very much in control. The next witness to Israel in the Law of Moses predicted that God would provoke them to jealousy and anger them by those who are not a distinct people but who would be part of a nation. Matthew 21:43 cp. with 1 Peter 2:9-10 make it clear that this entity would be the church. We will examine the prophet Isaiah. Israel had developed a system of thought by which they believed that the Gentiles were totally excluded from God’s plan without becoming a Jew even though the Old Testament scriptures taught otherwise. We must take care to always let scripture rather than Christian tradition, based on man-made thinking, determine what God is saying and doing.

Romans 10:20-21 – God’s present dilemma with Israel is this. Just as Isaiah predicted, the Gentiles, i.e. non-Jewish people, found God by coming to Christ through simple faith even though they had not been concerned with the question of sufficient righteousness according to Romans 9:30. The true God was revealed to the Gentiles who were not asking for God. This happened when they trusted Christ for salvation in response to the call of the gospel. On the other hand, God stretched out His hand pleading for the people of Israel to turn to Him by placing their faith in His Son, their promised Messiah. Israel is referred to as a disobedient and contrary people. They were disobedient in that they all failed to keep the law according to John 7:19. They were contrary as they repeatedly refused the pleadings of their Messiah (Matthew 23:37-39). They were determined to work for their salvation rather than to receive it by faith in Christ alone. We believers face this same problem with church members who are in one way or another trying to work for and add to faith in Christ for salvation. When Isaiah wrote what He did and when Jesus came, the Jewish people were so steeped in pride and tradition rather than humble childlike faith that it took great boldness on the part of both of them to confront their fellow-countrymen. May God give us that kind of boldness

in confronting the religiosity of those who profess Christ but who have never experienced His offer of eternal life by grace through faith.

C. Israel's rejection is not total (Romans 11:1-10)

Romans 11:1-5 – The question arises. Since God has been continually rejected in His offering of salvation to the Jewish people, is He through dealing with them? Some teach that the church has replaced Israel and that all her promises are for the church and not for the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is referred to as “replacement theology”. Paul offers three examples of God’s dealing with Israel. First, he states that he himself has certainly not been rejected. Therefore, God has not cast away the people of Israel whom He knew beforehand. The second example is Elijah who thought he was the only believer left and complained to God about what the unfaithful majority of the people of Israel had done in killing the prophets, tearing down God’s altars and seeking Elijah’s life. God pointed out to Elijah and to us by extension that there is a faithful remnant even in this present time who have come to Christ for salvation. During the time of Elijah, there were a small percentage of the people who were faithful, but these comprised a fairly large number. Paul concludes that at the present time when he was writing the book of Romans that there was a remnant based on the election or choice of saving grace. This small group of Jews who had trusted Christ for salvation comprised that remnant. The practical application for us is this. There are many counterfeit Christians who comprise the majority of what professes to be Christianity, but among them are those who are genuine believers. Those of us who are genuine believers have been chosen by God’s grace. As we have noted before, God’s election is not a rigged election. People are free to trust or reject Jesus Christ for salvation. God’s election and their free choice are consistent with one another. Just as Paul continued to witness to his countrymen, so we too need to be witnessing to those within the professing church as well as to those outside of it.

Romans 11:6 – Election is based on grace and not based on works. Grace and works in relation to salvation from the penalty of sin are mutually exclusive. The very oldest manuscripts omit the second part of the verse. However, not only the Textus Receptus on which the KJV and NKJV are based include it, but also the majority of the Greek manuscripts include it. Salvation had to be by faith so that it would be compatible with grace according to Romans 4:16. If salvation were by works, it would be

incompatible with grace. Since salvation is provided by grace, works are completely excluded. This verse shows that grace and works cannot be mixed when it comes to salvation. As we saw in Romans 9:11 that election was not based on works actual or foreseen. However, this does not say (as some who overemphasize God's sovereignty teach) that election is not based on foreseen faith. Knowing that election is by grace, and that faith and not works are compatible with grace allows for the possibility that foreseen faith is one way that God's election and man's free will can both exist. This allows God to be sovereign and for people to make an honest decision to believe or disbelieve the gospel. Too many have complicated the gospel by telling people that they cannot be saved unless God chose them. By this they make it appear that it all rests with God when God has privileged people with the opportunity to decide. Our job is to put that decision before them in a clear and forthright manner so that they know the consequences of belief and the consequences of unbelief.

Romans 11:7-10 – The question continues: why has Israel as a nation not obtained the salvation offered by her Messiah Jesus Christ. However, individual Jews, who comprise God's elect have obtained it while the rest were judicially blinded by God. There is natural blindness which is true of all unbelievers (1 Corinthians 2:14), Satanic blindness due to Satan's activity to blind people to the truth of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) and judicial blindness which afflicted Israel during the time of Moses as noted in Deuteronomy 29:4. They had witnessed great miracles from the beginning of their wilderness wanderings until they were on the verge of entering the land. Because of the unbelief of a good many of them, God had judicially blinded them because they had persisted in their unbelief. David in writing the Messianic Psalm 69 in verses 22 and 23 predicted that Israel would be judicially blinded for rejecting and crucifying their Messiah and that they were in a snare picturing an inescapable judgment, and were going to suffer God's vengeance. The eyes of Israel suffered darkening because of God's judicial blindness for what they had done to Jesus Christ who had done so many signs and wonders before their eyes. Israel as a nation was seeking a right relationship with God based on their works rather than on placing their faith in their Messiah Jesus Christ (Romans 9:30-33). This blindness continues even until today according to Romans 11:25. When the full number of Gentiles (non-Jews) are saved, then this blindness will be taken away. This is why evangelizing Jewish people is more difficult – but not impossible - than others even in our time.

D. Israel's rejection served God's purpose in helping
Gentiles to salvation (Romans 11:11-24)

Romans 11:11-12 - Israel's rejection of her Messiah and the judicial blindness that fell upon them due to this rejection raise another question in the mind of many people. Does this stumbling of Israel in relation to Jesus Christ mean that God is done with them as a nation even though He is dealing with them on an individual basis. The answer is that God is not through with Israel. Their fall is an obvious fact. However, there is purpose in God's working in this situation. God has opened the door wide open to the Gentiles, i.e. non-Jews, to His plan of salvation. God has done this in the sight of Israel. The intent of God's working is to provoke the people of Israel to jealousy. The fall of Israel from God's favor for the time being has meant riches for the world. By the world we mean those who are outside of Christ. Their failure to accept their Messiah by faith has meant the riches of salvation are more readily available to the Gentiles who have chosen to trust Christ for salvation. The conclusion is that if the world and particularly the Gentiles have been enriched by Christ and their trust in Him, how much more will the world and the Gentiles be enriched by God when the fullness of the Jews come to Christ by faith at the end of the 7 year tribulation. For the time being we as believers are to share the gospel with Jew and Gentile alike knowing that the response by Gentiles will be larger, but knowing that in the end, this will change when the nation of Israel in large numbers trusts her Messiah for salvation.

Romans 11:13-15 – The relationship between the Gentiles and Paul and how it will affect Israel's future is discussed further. First of all, he was the apostle to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7-9). His ministry or service to them was even more important to God's overall plan. In the present age, this ministry would provoke the Jews to jealousy so that some of them might be saved from the penalty of sin. Their being cast away temporarily has meant the reconciling of the world in providing salvation for everyone and with a large number (although a minority of the total number of Gentiles) of Gentiles receiving that provision by faith. When Christ returns the Jewish nation of remnant Jewish believers being accepted into the New Covenant will be life from the dead. A nation will be born in a day (Isaiah 66:8). The dead bones referring to the nation of Israel in unbelief will be made alive (Ezekiel 37:1-14). The future salvation of the nation from Israel added to

the full number of Gentiles to be saved will be comparable to the dead being made alive (Romans 11:25-27 cp. 11:15). This will be a great moment in the fulfilling of God's plan.

Romans 11:16-24 – Notice how the illustration is developed. Abraham and the patriarchs were the root and their descendents were the branches. They were like the first fruits offering of dough while the descendents were represented by the entire batch of dough. Abraham and the patriarchs were holy so the physical descendents were holy as well. However, some of these branches were broken off of this tree. These are the people of Israel who failed to trust Christ as Savior. In the meantime a wild olive tree which represents the Gentiles had branches broken off and grafted into the olive tree of Abraham. These engrafted branches represent the Gentiles who participated in the blessing of Abraham. This is not something to boast about against the Jewish people because the same thing can happen to their descendents as happened to the descendents of the Jews. If these Gentile descendents don't trust Christ for salvation, they will not be part of the original Olive tree root (Abraham) and will be broken off. God points out that if Israel turns and trusts Christ, then they will be grafted in again since they were part of the original branches. This illustration is not talking about an individual believing and then not believing and losing their salvation. It speaks of how God will work with each group. The group fails to continue from generation to generation to trust Christ, and then the generation that fails to trust Christ is broken off. God warns the Gentiles that He will deal severely with them just as He did with Israel for failure to trust Christ for salvation and thereby experience His kindness.

E. Israel as a nation will turn to Christ to the glory
and praise of God (Romans 11:25-36)

Romans 11:25-27 - It is important for believers, especially Gentile (non-Jewish) believers, to not be in the dark regard this mystery. A mystery is simply something that was not known or understood during Old Testament times but is now revealed and made known in the New Testament. The reason that God wants us as believers to know this about His plan for Israel is so that we will not get the big head and demonstrate a wisdom that is not from God. Israel has experienced blindness. However, this blindness is not total but partial. For this reason, many Jewish Christians have blessed the church with their spiritual insights (Matthew 13:52). However, most of the Jewish nation remains in a state of judicial blindness and spiritual

blindness and will do so until the complete number of Gentiles who are going to be saved have come to Christ. After that happens, Israel's blindness will be removed so that as a nation the people will come to trust Christ as their Messiah. This "all Israel" that will be saved will be a remnant according to Romans 9:27. The Deliverer or Savior Jesus Christ will come out of Zion in heaven (Hebrews 12:22-24) to Mount Zion on earth (Isaiah 59:20-21). At this time Israel by turning in faith to Christ will turn away from sin or ungodliness. At this time, they will enter the New Covenant and experience the taking away of their sins according to its provisions. Keep in mind that the New Covenant was provided by the death of Christ and went into effect at the time of His death (Hebrews 9:15-22). Since that time individual Jews have entered into that New Covenant as well as individual Gentiles by trusting Christ for salvation. However, Israel as a nation has not trusted Christ for salvation and so has not yet entered that New Covenant. They will trust Christ right before His return and will then as a nation enter the provisions of the New Covenant. We look forward to that day when we return with Christ to set up the 1000 year kingdom and see this great demonstration of the faithfulness of the Father and the Son to their word.

Romans 11:28 - The relationship of Israel at large not the present Jewish remnant is described. There is an obvious plan for the nation to be restored according to Romans 11:25-27. However, at the present time, Israel at large are enemies of the gospel because of those of us who are believers. This means we must be diligent to pray for them, do good to them, bless them and love them (Matthew 5:44). While they are enemies because of the gospel, we must not overlook the fact that they are God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). The term election does not mean that they are saved. It simply means that they are part of a people that God chose above all other peoples to be special to Him. They are also special objects of God's love because of His promise to the fathers, i.e. patriarchs, who are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As we practice the command Jesus gave us in Matthew 5:44, this is used by the Holy Spirit along with our presentation of the gospel to open their hearts to the truth of the gospel.

Romans 11:29 – These gifts and this calling came from God to and through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. While these do not insure the salvation of all Jews, it does offer them a favored status before God. These involve the promise of the land forever (Genesis 13:15). They have not enjoyed this promise because of sin but will in the future be in the land and never to be

removed (Ezekiel 37:21-25; 39:21-29). This time is associated with Christ's 1000 year kingdom. Jeremiah 33:20-26 promises the eternality of the Davidic line to rule over Israel although that was disrupted and will be completely resumed when Jesus sits upon the throne of David with King David as his under-regent (Hosea 3:4-5; Luke 1:31-33; Matthew 25:21). The principle that is stated here has even further implications for the believer. One of them is that salvation is a gift provided by God's grace and received by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). Since salvation is a gift from God given at the moment we trust Christ as Savior, we are promised that this gift is irrevocable. This supports the teaching of God's word that once an individual is saved, he is secure.

Romans 11:30-32 - These verses offer great insight into the mind of God. As non-Jews, i.e. Gentile believers, we were once in a state of disobedience to God but now are in a state of experiencing God's mercy. This opportunity came about as the result of the disobedience of the Jewish people at large which climaxed in their rejecting their Messiah and Savior Jesus Christ. Presently the Jewish people at large are in a state of disobedience so that the mercy that God has shown to those Gentiles who trusted Christ would make it possible for them to obtain they same mercy – but only if they place their faith in Christ. God has committed all people to disobedience so that it will be possible for Him to have mercy on everyone – but again this possibility is not realized unless they place their faith in Christ. Romans 11:32 shows that one of the reasons that God permitted evil in this world was so that it would be possible for His mercy to be shown. Secondly, this verse refutes those who say that Christ died only for the elect, i.e. the saved. When the word “all” is used, they state that it does not mean everyone but rather all kinds of people. However, this passage refutes that reasoning because one would have to understand that if God offers the possibility of mercy to all kinds of people instead of to all people, then one would have to understand that it is just all kinds of people who were committed to disobedience instead of all people. Christ's death provides salvation mercy for every individual but only those who receive it by faith actually receive the salvation mercy. These mercies of God toward Gentile Christians and the Jewish nation in the future are the basis for consecrating or committing our lives and bodies to the Lordship of Jesus Christ according to Romans 12:1.

Romans 11:33-36 – The majesty of God is praised in response to God's working through and in spite of Israel's unbelief. By God's majesty, we

mean that greatness of God of which there is no greater. God's wisdom and His knowledge are considered both deep and rich. Any other wisdom and knowledge are poor by comparison. The knowledge of God is said to be that He knows all things in 1 John 3:20. However, God not only knows all things but is able to put that knowledge to work in His dealings with the creation and the other members of the trinity. The second item of praise has to do with the fact that God is to some extent incomprehensible. This means that we cannot begin to know or understand all there is to know about God's judgments or His ways. This does not mean that we cannot understand God at all. It simply acknowledges that our understanding is very limited. In additional praise we note that no one has known the mind of the LORD. None of us have ever been an advisor or counselor to God although many people including believers would like to do so. Our knowledge and wisdom are far too limited to do anything like that. Next God is to be praised because He owes no one anything. Too many people approach God as though He was our debtor and that He owes us whatever we believe we deserve. When we recognize that God owes us nothing but eternal wrath, we are well on our way to a grace orientation and perspective of life. The issue is not anything that God owes us but what we owe God. This prayer concludes with the fact that God is the source (of Him), sustainer (through Him) and purpose (to Him) of all things that exist including ourselves. For this reason glory or honor belong to Him forever.

PART FOUR: Salvation and Its Outworking (Romans Chapters 12-16)

A. A surrendered life (Romans 12:1-3)

Romans 12:1-2 – The mercies of God which we received as disobedient sinners in Romans 11:30-32 are the basis for us to make the decision to surrender control of our bodies to the control of God. The word “present” is translated “to put at my disposal” in Matthew 26:53. We are to put our bodies at God's disposal. The Greek word for “present” is aorist tense in the Greek language and carries the idea of a once and for all commitment of our lives to Christ. This is not a commitment that receives salvation from the penalty of sin because the condition for that is simple, child-like faith in Jesus Christ in trusting His substitutionary bloodshed death, His bodily resurrection and His being Lord or God, i.e. the supreme authority of our lives. At salvation the Lordship of Christ is accepted but not actualized and fully activated. This commitment in Romans 12:1-2 activates and actualizes the Lordship of Christ to experience the abundant Christian life

for us as believers (John 10:10). Like marriage, this commitment is made at a once and for all point of time. Then like marriage, it is lived out on a day by day basis (Luke 9:23). This verse readily refutes the idea that the Lordship of Christ is fully activated (even though it is trusted for salvation) as a condition of saving faith because that is what Paul is asking those who are already believers to do (Note the word “brothers”). The word “urge” comes from the same Greek word that is translated “encourage.” As believers, we need to encourage one another to make this decision. The word “sacrifice” shows that this decision is going to be costly. It is about us being conformed to Christ’s likeness instead of being comfortable with our sinful selves. This yieldedness involves practical holiness. This simply means being set apart for God’s purposes rather than your own agenda or the agenda of others. Finally a surrendered life and body is not about pleasing ourselves or even others but is about pleasing God. It is the essence of what it means to be godly. It is our spiritual worship. The word for “worship” emphasizes our service to God. We turn over the controls of our bodies and lives to God as a servant to do His will not to use Him to get our will and way.

To yield our bodies and our lives to Christ’s control, it is important that we not be conformed to the present age or times in which we live. What does it mean to be conformed to this age? Hebrews 1:1-2 refer to the present times or age in which we live as the last times. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 describe what the last times are like. It is time when people fail to love God but choose to love self, pleasure and money. People are boastful, proud and speak disrespectfully of God and other people. As children they are disobedient to parents and lack a sense of thankfulness to God or to others. People do not hesitate to live apart from God’s purposes for their lives. They lack natural affection for spouses, children, parents and other family members. They cannot be counted on to keep their word and honor their commitments. They make false or unfounded accusations toward others and lack self-control of their bodily desires and impulses. They are violent and haters of what is good. Moreover, people tend to be unreliable, impulsive or reckless in their decisions and actions, and conceited. We find that many have a form of godliness but it does not translate into changed living. This is an excellent summary of what it means to be conformed to this age or time period in which we live. Instead of going with the flow of the times, we are to let ourselves be transformed from the inside out so that the divine nature which is present in us through the Holy Spirit can work to change or renew our minds and our thinking. Our part in this process is to

learn, believe and obey God's word. In this way we will have the discernment of what God's will is for our lives. If we want to know God's will the surrendered Christian life is absolutely essential. There are three important things that we will discover concerning God's will. First, it is good. Second, it is pleasing to God. Finally, it is perfect. This does not mean that our lives will go on without great problems, but it does mean that this will be God's best in a sin-cursed and imperfect world.

Romans 12:3 – One of the first specific steps that we take in committing or yielding our lives and bodies to the control of the Lord Jesus Christ is to have an accurate estimation of yourself. It starts with the grace of God which recognizes that everything we are and everything we have is by God's grace. That is to say that it is all by God's goodness that we do not deserve in any way. We are commanded to avoid having an inflated opinion of ourselves. Notice that the correction for this is not to have a low opinion of ourselves. We are called upon to think sensibly (literally in a sound or right minded manner) concerning ourselves. It is like a car that is veering off the right side of the road. The correction is to get the car back on to the road. It is not to go off the left side of the road. This rational estimate of ourselves must be in keeping with the amount of faith that God has distributed to us. This faith comes from hearing God's word (Romans 10:17). The sound mind or sensible thinking is a result of the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives according to 2 Timothy 1:7. For this reason we must ever strive to filled with the Holy Spirit and not with ourselves.

B. Recognition and use of spiritual gifts (Romans 12:4-8)

Romans 12:4-8 – Keep in mind, this passage on spiritual gifts occurs in the context of what is involved in the surrendered Christian life. Our physical bodies have many members or parts such as our nose, ears, eyes, hair, arms and legs. These parts do not have the same function. The same is true in Christ's spiritual body. All together, those of us who have trusted Christ for salvation are one spiritual body, the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Individually, we are parts of one another. We are all joined together. Just as our body parts do not have the same functions, so in the same way, each of us as a part of the body of Christ do not have the same spiritual gift or gifts. Yet we are joined to the other parts of this spiritual body which represent different spiritual gifts. This difference is based on the grace (better "gift", i.e. spiritual gift) that is given to us. So we are to exercise this gift according to what it is. The first of these gifts is prophecy. This is to be

exercised according to the faith. That is the actual translation of the verses above. The faith carries the idea of the contents of the New Testament. What prophecy is given forth must be in harmony with the New Testament revelation. If it is not, then it must be rejected (see Isaiah 8:20 and Deuteronomy 13:1-5).

If our spiritual gift is service or helps, we need to be exercising it by serving or helping. If our spiritual gift is teaching, we need to be exercising it by teaching. The believer with the spiritual gift of exhortation needs to be about the business of exhorting or encouraging other believers. The gift of giving is to be exercised with generosity. The gift of leading others is to be exercised with diligence. Diligence involves carefulness and accuracy. This is important because we must know where we are leading the people of God because God will hold us accountable (Ezekiel 34:2-10). Finally, there is the spiritual gift of showing mercy. This differs from the gift of serving or helping in that showing mercy is a crisis type of gift. This is the person that knows what to do to relieve or improve a crisis situation that afflicts another believer. The one with the gift of helps or service tends to have some type of ongoing ministry. The gift of showing mercy is to be used with a cheerful attitude and demeanor not in a grudging way. Passages such as this help to answer the question: If we were all like Christ, how would we be the same, and how would we be different? Our gifts while making us different help to supplement the function of believers so that together they are helping other believers to become more like Christ.

C. Relating to other people (Romans 12:9-21)

Romans 12:9 – As we continue looking at what a yielded Christians life is to look like, we now look at some definite do's and don'ts. The first of these is that love is to be sincere or as some translations put it "without hypocrisy." What does sincere love look like and what does insincere love look like? First of all, sincere love is fervent and from a pure heart (1 Peter 1:22). Sincere love builds up or promotes Christ likeness (1 Corinthians 8:1). Sincere love always obeys God's word (1 John 5:2-3; 2 John 1:5-6). Sincere love is not just talk and teaching, it is action (1 John 3:17-18). Finally sincere love is sacrificial (1 John 3:16). Love from wrong motives is certainly not sincere nor when it fails to meet the criteria above. We are also commanded to hate what is evil. Psalm 97:10 states that if we love God, we are going to hate evil. Usually, we do a pretty good job of hating

evil in the lives of others, but do poorly when we fail to hate it in our own lives or the lives of people that we are so close to that we are blind to their shortcomings. The Greek verb tense for “hate” is present tense which speaks of continuous action or consistent action. 2 Timothy 3:3 notes that the last days will be characterized by people who hate what is good. Notice that we are not commanded to hate people who are evil, but we are to hate their deeds (see Revelation 2:6). We are to keep on clinging to what is good. The Greek word for good means good in the sense of beneficial. We are saved for the purpose of good works (Ephesians 2:10). We are to do good to all people which is a special emphasis on those who are believers (Galatians 6:10). Finally, we are to cling to good so strongly that we suffer for doing good rather than doing wrong (1 Pet. 3:17) and to entrust our well-being to God in doing good in the face of suffering (1 Pet. 4:19). Some versions use the word “right” in these last two references but it is the same Greek word that is used in Ephesians 2:10 and Galatians 6:10. Being a do-gooder is an important part of what it means to be a committed Christian.

Romans 12:10 - This passage explains two kinds of love that believers are to have toward one another. One of these is the Greek word “storgas” which speaks of the love of family members toward one another such as parent/child and child/parent love. This is important because one of the results of the downward evolution of people is found in Romans 1:31 where the word unloving (better, “without natural affection” as in the KJV) is used. This same word is used to describe the characteristics of people in the last days in which we live (2 Timothy 3:3). Spousal, child, and elder abuse and neglect are the outcome of failing to practice this kind of love toward one another in the family of God. The second type of love is translated “brotherly love” which is often understood as friendship love. This type of love is described in Proverbs 17:17 and 27:5-6. It emphasizes caring and concern for one another at all times – good or bad, convenient or inconvenient. It also cares enough to confront if there is sin in the life of the loved one. The word for love in Romans 12:9 that we studied speaks of agape love which is sacrificial love. Notice as we show this family and friendship love for one another as believers, we are to compete with one another in giving honor or respect to one another rather than trying to get honor from one another. Jesus told a parable which was very important in this concept in Luke 14:7-11. This requires us to humble ourselves, to cease from selfish ambition and to regard one another as more important than ourselves. We are to seek to serve rather than to be served (Mark

10:45) and to give rather than receive (Acts 20:35). When believers compete in this way, Christ becomes more real to them and to those around them.

Romans 12:11 - We continue looking at the character of what it means to be a yielded and surrendered believer. We are not to be lacking or lagging behind in diligence. The Greek word speaks of the concept of whole-hearted effort. Some believers have fallen prey to the idea that the Christian life does not involve any effort on our part. Yet here, we are warned against not putting forth a sincere effort. While the first phrase speaks of what we are doing or how we are doing it, the next phrase speaks of the disposition we are to have. We are to be fervent or enthusiastic in our approach to the Christian life and service. This requires continually looking at situations from God's viewpoint and not a human viewpoint. Finally, we see that the Christian life is a life of service. Much is said in scripture about being a servant. We must recognize that it is service to the Lord Jesus Christ. It must not be divided (Matthew 6:24). It is about doing our duty even when we do not feel like it (Luke 17:7-10). It is about pleasing Christ not people (Galatians 1:10). It involves putting aside selfish ambition (Philippians 2:3) and attachments to the world system and its principles. We must take inventory. Am I putting whole-hearted effort into the Christian life? Do I have an enthusiasm for the things of God, or have I left my first love (Rev. 2:4-5)? Finally, who am I really trying to please in my service?

Romans 12:12 - The description of the character of a committed Christian continues. People rejoice in a lot of different things: the birth of a child, the landing of a job or promotion, getting engaged or married or acquiring a new home, car or other desire. All these things can change rapidly. Health or wealth can be lost or any of the preceding items can be reversed. As believers we are to keep on rejoicing in our hope. Our hope is a confident expectation not just a desire concerning a possible outcome. According to Hebrews 6:19, we can rejoice in our hope because it is sure and not uncertain. We also see from Hebrews 6:19 that it is steadfast. It is not going to go away. It is secure. It is the return of Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13) and our being like Him (1 John 3:2-3). 1 Peter 1:3-4 states that our hope is a living hope because Jesus bodily rose from the dead. It is an inheritance that cannot be destroyed, ruined by sin or evil and that does not fade away or lose value with the passing of time. Whatever may go wrong in our lives, we are able to keep rejoicing in this hope or confident expectation because

it is constant. We are told to keep on persevering in our tribulation or problems. Problems in life come at the most awkward and inconvenient times. It is tempting to abandon fellowship with God to try to resolve or manage the problem. We are commanded keep persevering during these times. Keep on trusting and obeying God even though it does not make sense. As Job said in Job 13:15, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.." We are not left to do these things on our own. We are to keep on being devoted to prayer. This means making prayer a priority. This is the means by which we enlist God's help and enablement to rejoice and persevere. Prayer is to be private (Matthew 6:6) and corporate (Matthew 18:19-20; Acts 20:36; 21:5-6). Why are Bible-believing churches not experiencing more growth and impact. It is a lack of both corporate and individual prayer. Satan's greatest achievement in American life is not getting prayer out of schools but getting prayer out of our homes and churches.

Romans 12:13 - How we respond to believers in need is a test of how well we have yielded our lives to Christ. 1 John 3:17 tells us that this is a need that we can financially meet and that we are aware of that need. Notice that this is speaking of needs not items that make life more convenient. 1 Timothy 6:8 defines needs as food and covering. This would include food, shelter and clothing. In modern society, medicine would be included under food. It does not mean that we should enable fellow-believers to be irresponsible with the income and resources that they do have. Such items as alcohol, tobacco, pets, cable TV, internet need to go. The fact that an elderly person decides to keep his dog and forego his blood pressure medicine does not put him in need. He is choosing to keep that pet rather than meet the need. A good example is believers living in cold climates without heat who need a blanket just to keep the family warm. 2 Corinthians 8:13 tells us that we are not to do this so that we are in need while other believers are put at ease. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 reminds us that we should not meet a need if someone refuses to work even if it means they have to go hungry. We are to help those who cannot work according to Acts 20:35. To help believers who are genuinely in need is a test of the reality of our faith (James 2:15-16) and our love (1 John 3:17-18). There are two passages which describe hospitality. 3 John 1:5-8 describes it as helping missionaries whom we do not personally know with board, room and funds for their work. Matthew 25:35-40 describe hospitality as being done for the brethren or fellow-believers in the form of food, drink, shelter, clothing, help in sickness or in prison (prisoners in

Christ's time and in many 3rd world countries today depend on outsiders to bring them food, drink and clothing). In some areas of the world, the plight of Christians is so desperate that hospitality is definitely more in practice whereas in the United States and other western countries, the government provides much of this kind of help. This largely came about because of the Christian influence of these cultures. We never know when all of this could change. In the meantime, as we have opportunity, we are to do good to all people in these ways, especially the family of believers (Galatians 6:10).

Romans 12:14 – How we respond to people who try to harm us because of our stand for Christ or for doing what is right in God's viewpoint is a real test of our being yielded to the Lordship of Christ. This harm or persecution is usually minor or it can be major. Minor persecution is described in Luke 6:22 as being hated (either in the form of open antagonism or cold indifference), ostracism or being excluded from the company of other people, being insulted and finally being spoken of as though we were some type of evil person. Major persecution on the other hand includes imprisonment and/or death as in Revelation 2:10, loss of property as in Hebrews 10:34 and physical assault and/or torture as in 2 Corinthians 11:24-25. Our response toward persecutors is to bless them. We are not to respond in kind by returning evil for evil (1 Peter 3:9). To bless them means to speak well to them and of them. It means to ask God to bless them. On the other, we are not to curse our persecutors. This means we are not to speak in bad manner to them or concerning them. It means we do not ask God to harm them. Keep in mind, all of us know that this is not a natural response. It is a supernatural response and requires that we walk or live our lives in personal dependence on the working and controlling of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16).

Romans 12:15 – A committed and yielded Christian life is involved closely in the lives of other believers. The word "with" is very important. One of the activities that are to do with other believers is share our joys and let them share their joys. It is hard when things are not going very good in our lives to listen while some other believer shares their joys with us. Yet this a responsibility that we have. We usually have no trouble sharing our joys with other believers. If we do not share our sorrows, they will think that their Christian life must be out of sync because all we seem to ever have is joy. By the same token if share only the sorrowful aspects of our Christian life, believers will be discouraged thinking it is only a matter of time before their life takes a nosedive into permanent despair. We need to be

balanced in sharing our joys and sorrows with other believers so that they and others see Christ working in the good and the bad times. If other believers are not balanced in this area, we need to work with them on developing this balance so that they do not get into a mode of building one another down. Our job as Christians is to share one another's ups and downs in such a way that we do not come across as Pollyanna's or bubblers nor do we come across with one never-ending pity party after another.

Romans 12:16 – One of the important characteristics of the yielded Christian is humility in relation to how we view and relate to other people. Some believers fail to fellowship with other believers because they are culturally different in some ways than we are. We need to regard fellow-believers who are on higher cultural levels with the same mind as those who are on lower cultural levels. It is easy to look down on other believers because we possess certain advantages that they do not possess. We are to associate with those on the lower end of the cultural scale not avoid them or write them off. These differences may be economic, social, racial, physical or intellectual. As we do this we build the connections that promote genuine Christ-likeness in one another and show the reality of Christ to the unsaved world. Finally, we are not to be wise in our own sight, thinking that somehow, the ideas and opinions of other believers do not matter. To accomplish this, we must learn to be good listeners and accepting of one another where Christians differ in areas not forbidden or commanded by scripture. The key to all this is having the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5) and focusing on what we can give and how many we can serve rather than how much we can get and how many we can control (Mark 10:45; Acts 20:35).

Romans 12:17-18 – Romans 12:17-21 tells us how to deal with conflict and the offenses and mistreatment we receive from other people. These commandments and restrictions are part of what it means to yield ourselves to God's control. The first principle is to avoid doing evil to others when they do evil to you. This does not mean that you cannot defend yourself or your loved ones if attacked. It does mean that we are not to take matters into our own hands to punish the person. We can use human government which is God's servant to address difficulties with others in extreme cases. In the case of non-criminal disputes with other believers, we can involve the church leadership to work to bring about a resolution (1 Cor. 6:1-8). In any case we need to do all we can, so long as

we do not disobey God's word, to get along with all people. This may involve surrendering rights but never involves surrendering responsibilities. We cannot insure that people will not disrupt the peace between us and them, but we need to make sure we are not the ones disrupting that peace. Whatever depends on us is something that we can control. It is important that we do what is right in the sight of all people so long as we do not disobey God's word. For example, in some cultures, there is a requirement that women be veiled. Believing women living in such cultures should go ahead and follow that requirement even though it is not required by scripture, because it is something that the particular culture expects, and it is something that would not be forbidden by scripture. 2 Corinthians 8:21 commands us as believers to do what is honorable in the sight of God and what is honorable in the sight of people.

Romans 12:19-21 - We have been looking at this issue of conflict, offenses and mistreatment that we receive from other people. We are told not to take revenge on a personal level but to leave room for God's wrath to work. One of the ways we can leave room for God's wrath to work is to take the matter to human government if it involves criminal conduct. As God's servant human government can take revenge for God. We read concerning human government in the ESV of Romans 13:3, *"For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer."* The problem comes when we try to take our own revenge rather than leaving the matter with God. It is God's prerogative to avenge the wrongs done to us whether He does it through human government or more direct working on His part. One of the ways in which we can crowd out God's wrath is to rejoice when God's wrath begins to fall on our enemy. Proverbs 24:17-18 says, *"Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him."* If we do deeds of kindness and helpfulness to our enemies in return for their evil deeds against us, God states that we intensify the working of God's wrath. In summary, we are not to let the evil deeds done against us overcome us by trying to do evil in return or in some way get even. When we do that, we are overcome by the evil done against us. When we do deeds of kindness and helpfulness to our enemies in return for their evil deeds against us, we will overcome the evil they are doing to us and any evil springing up in our own lives and hearts.

D. Our duty to government authorities (Romans 13:1-7)

Romans 13:1-2 - Another aspect of what it means to be committed to God is how we handle ourselves in relation to the governing authorities. A government requirement is a requirement of God's word unless it commands us to disobey God's word (Acts 5:29; Daniel 6:7-10; Exodus 1:16-17). In that case God's word instructs us to obey the commandment of God and disobey the commandment of the government. Some believers have tried to practice civil disobedience to laws that they believe are unjust even though obeying such laws does not require us to disobey God's commandments. However, the scripture is very clear on this matter. The reason that we are to be subject to the governing authorities is that no authority is in existence except the one that God has instituted. For this reason whenever we resist authority for any reason other than the exception above is resisting what God has appointed. We are told that we will incur judgment from God if we resist the governing authorities. What kind of judgment is God speaking of. Certainly, it is not a judgment of condemnation for the believer because when we trusted Christ, we were delivered from any future judgment of condemnation (John 3:18; 5:24; Romans 8:1, 34). However, there are two ways in which God brings judgment into the believer's life. The first of these is in the form of God's discipline (1 Corinthians 11:31-32). The second is in the form of lost rewards (not salvation) at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Examples of government laws, that we are subject to, include laws against driving violations and laws requiring us to report for jury duty. Christian parents must be sure to teach obedience to their children in the home and then at school because teachers are agents of the government. Parents who try to run interference for their children against school authorities fail to teach their children the sad truth that people in authority are there not because they are perfect but because they have been put there by God. We must keep in mind that governing authorities have God's appointment but do not necessarily have His approval (Rom. 9:17). For this reason, we must guard our own attitude and actions in relation to those who are in authority.

Romans 13:3-4 - We continue looking at the believers relationship to the governing authorities in relation to the yielded Christian life. Overall rulers are a terror to evil deeds but not good deeds. While there are exceptions to this, this is the general rule even in the most despotic of states. If we want to avoid being fearful of those in authority, generally we need to do

good and as a result, you will experience good. Again there are exceptions to this, but this is generally how things work. One of the reasons that we do what is good in the sight of the governing authorities is that they are servants of God to us for good. If we do evil, we definitely need to fear government for they do not possess the sword for nothing. This is a clear teaching that God has given government the authority to put people to death. Both Jesus and Paul in their conversations with those in authority acknowledged that government has been given this prerogative (John 19:11; Acts 25:11). One of the roles of government is to be God's servant to bring about revenge to carry out God's wrath against evil-doers. This is why when believers are wronged such as having an unlawful act committed against them that they can seek to have God avenge that act through the government. Failing in that, the believer leaves such vengeance directly to God (Romans 12:19-20).

Romans 13:4-5 – We look at what it means for a believer to live a yielded life before God in relation to human government. Since government serves God's purpose to execute God's wrath on evildoers, we as believers have a responsibility to be in subjection to the authority of government unless they ask us to disobey God's commandments (Acts 5:29). The first reason we are to be subject or obedient to the governmental authorities is to avoid being an evildoer not only in their sight but God's sight. Otherwise, we may find ourselves experiencing God's wrath through the government. There was a case where a pastor committed income tax fraud and had to serve a year in the federal prison. He was experiencing God's wrath as well as the wrath of the government. We are certainly not appointed to wrath in relation to eternal condemnation (1 Thessalonians 5:9 cp John 5:24) but can experience God's wrath on matters in this life. Our subjection to government is necessary in order for the believer to maintain a good conscience before God. When we trust Christ as savior our conscience is cleansed (Hebrews 9:14: 10:22). However, we must make an effort to maintain a good conscience in the sight of God and people (Acts 24:16) because we can lose a good conscience (1 Timothy 1:19). This is why it is important for believers to obey or be in subjection to the governing authorities because of the damage it can bring to our conscience. We are told here that we are in subjection for the benefit or sake of our conscience. As Christian grandparents and parents, we must encourage our children or grandchildren to obey governing authorities such as policemen and school teachers. As we see the reasons for this, these become our motivations for this obedience to those in authority. Godly

living is not just a matter of obedience in thought, word, deed and appearance but also in having biblical motives for that obedience.

Romans 13:6-7 – One time a younger believer and his wife said that they felt so strongly about abortion that they were thinking of not paying their income tax and going to prison if need be. However, these verses in what they say and in terms of history command that believers pay taxes and other money due to the government such as fees. Keep in mind that Nero was the emperor at the time that this was written. Nero was a bisexual pedophile and undoubtedly, some of the money collected for taxes was used to finance his perverse lifestyle. Under Roman law, babies could be put out to die of exposure if parents did not want them. Using the logic of this young couple would have required Paul to tell the Roman believers not to pay taxes because they were supporting a government that allowed and even in some cases promoted this practice. Not only that, the Romans were permitting and promoting the persecution of Christians although at this time, the worst persecutions under Nero had not yet begun. It would seem very clear that paying taxes and fees is a command of God for the support of human government which generally but not always serves the purposes of God. We are also commanded to show respect for those in authority. This does not mean that we cannot criticize their policies in a democratic state, but we must respect them whether we think they deserve it or not. We are to be grace-oriented toward government officials and give them the respect and honor that God commands. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 says that we are even to give thanks for them. As believers, we must understand that these are commands that clarify what it means to live a yielded Christian life.

E. Our primary duty of love (Rom. 13:8-10)

Romans 13:8 – The subject of paying what we owe the government is expanded to include all money that we owe to anyone whether it be the government or a private lender. Then from there it transitions to the debt of love we have toward one another as believers and toward all people. The question arises, should believers be in debt? Obviously, Jesus would not have told us to lend money if being a debt was a sin because then we would be promoting sin because it would put the recipient in debt (Luke 6:35). However, borrowing money does limit our freedom (Proverbs 22:7). What this verse is clearly teaching is that we are not to let debts be outstanding. This means that we are to pay on time. This also means we

are not to incur debts when there are not clear contingency plans in place. An example of this kind of failure occurred in my home town. There were people who owed the local physician money for services but were not making any effort to repay that money. They were dining in restaurants repeatedly. They were going on nice out-of-town trips. This was definitely a violation of this command. Sometimes people insist on buying homes that strain their means to repay because they are unwilling to be content with a smaller house. Another way that people fail to obey this commandment is by cosigning. Proverbs 22:26 states *Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, one of those who is surety for debts.* People make all sorts of excuses for disobeying this commandment and its clarification. My kid can't get this item he or she needs if I do not cosign. They can't get a good job or education. If you do this, you might as well tell God to get off the throne of your life and that you know better what needs to be done. Several times, a daughter wanted her parents to cosign: for a vehicle, for a credit card and for an apartment for college. They refused every time and today the daughter has developed very solid financial management skills. Another way that people disobey this commandment is not paying the people who work for them on time or at all (James 5:4). The heart of the one who has outstanding debts that are unpaid is one of greed which God cannot honor or bless. Financial responsibility is one of the marks (but not the only one) of a yielded Christian life.

Romans 13:8-10 - Loving other believers is something that we owe one another. This is the way that people outside of Christ know that we are Christ's disciples (John 13:34-35). When we love others in general we fulfill the Old Testament law requirement to love our fellowman as we already love ourselves. The specific commandments cited here comprise some of the components of what it means to love our fellowman as we love ourselves. As we live our lives in harmony with the Holy Spirit rather than our sinful nature the possibility of the law being fulfilled is realized (Romans 8:4). This verse helps us to know if we love our fellowman as we love ourselves if we do no harm to them. The parable of the Good Samaritan is an excellent illustration of what it means on the positive side to show love to our fellowman (Luke 10:25-37). Not doing harm describes what we are not to do and showing mercy to others describes the positive side of what we are to do. This commandment demonstrates more fully than any other what a yielded life looks like.

F. The need to put on the Lord Jesus Christ
(Romans 13:11-14)

Romans 13:11 – As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we know the time in which we live is the last days (Hebrews 1:1-2) and that it is a time of great peril (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Ephesians 5:16 reminds us that the days are evil. We as believers are called upon to be alert which is pictured by being asked to be awake and abandon our indifference which is pictured by sleep. Our motivation for being alert or discerning rather than indifferent is found in the fact that our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. To be sure, we were saved from the penalty of sin at the moment we trusted Christ for salvation (Luke 7:50; John 5:24). That aspect of our salvation is already past. We are presently being saved from the power of sin as mentioned in 1 Timothy 4:16. However, when Jesus Christ returns for His own, we will be saved from the presence of sin. We will be like Christ in character at that time (1 John 3:2). The point is that the time of Christ's anytime return is sooner than when we first trusted Him for salvation. This is to be our motive to live alertly and with discernment rather living with indifference along with an accurate assessment of the present time.

Romans 13:12-13 - The present age in which we live is compared to night. The believers 2000 years ago were living in a night that was far spent. We are obviously much closer to the day which may come at any time. That day which is at hand is the return of Jesus Christ. We are living in a dark and sinful world (Ephesians 6:12). We are commanded to cast off the works of darkness. These refer to sinful thoughts, words and behaviors. Some examples are given here. The first of these is revelry which refers to wild parties where the participants are out of control including sexual orgies. The second work of darkness is drunkenness in which alcohol or drugs control us and others. Lewdness refers to a Greek word meaning sexual promiscuity. Lust refers to a Greek word which means preoccupation with bodily pleasure (the philosophy, if it feels good, do it). Strife speaks of quarreling and arguing with others. Finally envy is the desire for someone else's possessions, pleasures, or prominence. All of these belong to our sinful past. To correct this, our lifestyle or walk is to be consistent with the day when we will be like Christ (1 John 3:2-3). We are to behave as we will behave then. We are also to put on the armor of light which refers to the spiritual provisions that God has given us for victory over Satan and his angels (demons). These are listed in Ephesians 6:14-

18 and consist of truthfulness, practical righteousness,, being prepared to tell the gospel to others, trusting Christ for the power and direction to live the Christian life, focusing on the future aspect of our salvation from sin's presence when Christ returns, proper use of God's word and Spirit-controlled prayer. These provisions are spoken of as the armor of light. This means that they give light to others in this dark world. They show forth the reality of Christ to those who are unbelievers and to those who are believers. Those of us who have trusted Christ for salvation, now have a perfect standing before God, but we do not have a perfect state. We will have a perfect state as well as a perfect standing when Jesus returns. In light of this, we are to live according to the day which comes when Christ returns.

Romans 13:14 – We continue our examination of the yielded Christian life. We saw that we are not to live in harmony with the sinful darkness of this world pictured by the night, but to put on the character qualities of the armor, i.e. God's spiritual warfare provisions. Finally, in this verse, we are told to replace the sinful behaviors of darkness (which are to be taken off like a garment by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ in place of these sinful behaviors). To be sure, we have put on the Lord Jesus Christ as far as our standing or position before God is concerned (*Galatians 3:26-27*). However, in *Romans 13:14*, we are commanded to put on the Lord Jesus Christ in our practice. This means that we give Him the preeminence or first place in everything (*Colossians 1:18*). We live our lives as He lived His life (*1 John 2:6*; *1 Peter 2:21*). In doing this, we are also commanded to make no provision for our sinful nature, i.e. flesh. This would mean that we would not allow the thoughts, speech and behaviors of the life before we came to Christ to be a part of our life. This clearly warns against making compromises in this area. We are not to be lukewarm (*Revelation 3:16*). If we make provision for the sinful nature and its accompanying behaviors of our lives prior to our salvation, we feed the sinful nature and starve our spiritual growth. If we make no provision for the sinful nature within us, we starve that sinful nature and feed the new nature which is created in God's image in true righteousness and holiness (*Ephesians 4:24*). The committed Christian life and the compromised Christian life are simply not compatible because Jesus said that no one can serve two masters (*Matthew 6:24*).

H. Principles for issues not commanded or forbidden
by God's word (Romans 14:1-23)

Romans 14:1-2 - How we handle differences concerning questions that scripture does not prescribe or prohibit is a test point for being a yielded Christian. Faith is based on God's revelation through scripture and through conscience. With scripture there is little if no difference in determining what is right and wrong. On issues of conscience, Christians differ widely. Some hold the conviction that smoking is wrong while others would say that we are free to smoke. Others would argue that dancing is wrong while others would have strong opinions that there is nothing wrong with it. Another example would be the use of playing cards. Some Christians would not touch a deck of cards while others see no harm in such behavior. As this passage develops, we see that the one who is weak in faith has a more restrictive conscience than the one who is strong in faith. Believers are commanded to accept believers who have restrictive or weak consciences. The example that is given here is the dispute that had arisen over eating foods. Those who were weak, i.e. restrictive in conscience were eating only vegetables because they did not want to take any chances on eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Other believers who were strong, i.e. not restrictive in their conscience, felt free to eat anything. One important commandment with regard to these issues is to avoid quarreling concerning these matters because God's word does not prescribe nor prohibit either practice.

Romans 14:3-4 - We continue examining the response of the yielded Christian with regard to handling differences of conscience levels – the weak and restrictive conscience contrasted with the strong less restrictive conscience. To fully expand this understanding, Christians may disagree on how to apply principles but they may not disagree on how to apply precepts (specific commands, eg. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13). The one who eats everything (example of less restrictive conscience) must not treat with contempt or otherwise put down the one who does not eat everything (example of more restrictive conscience). This is a command! On the other hand, the one who does not eat everything (example of more restrictive conscience) must not judge the one who eats everything (example of less restrictive conscience). This is also a commandment! Believers are servants of the Lord and because of that we are not to judge them concerning how restrictive or unrestrictive their conscience is on these non-commanded issues. To Christ, their own master they will stand

or fall as servants. They will stand because Christ is able to make them stand without being out of compliance with God's word regardless of what they choose to do on the non-commanded issues so long as they do not violate the specific commandments regulating non-commanded issues. We will continue discussing how this principle applies to the observance of days.

Romans 14:5-6 - We look at how the yielded believer handles those questions of how to live when the scripture does not give us a command or prohibition. The observance of days is a big issue for some. Some churches have even put Sunday into their doctrinal statement as the replacement for the Sabbath even though the New Testament does not set aside any special day. The early Puritans did not observe Christmas and mandated it for all their members. These verses make it very clear that the choice to observe one day above another or to observe all days alike is a matter of the individual believer's preference or conscience. The important thing is that we do it in honor of the Lord. The believer with a more restrictive conscience will probably set aside one day as special while the believer with a less restrictive conscience will consider all days alike. Some Christians refuse to shop or eat at a restaurant on Sunday while others see no problem with this. These like eating or not eating meat sacrificed to idols are issues of freedom over which we should not judge or show contempt for one another. Both those with the restrictive conscience (e.g. observing certain days above others and not eating meat sacrificed to idols) and those with the non-restrictive conscience (observing all days as the same and eating meat sacrificed to idols) give thanks to God for being able to live freely in harmony with their conscience and in honor to God. The only commandment that we have in these verses is that each believer should firmly make up his own mind and do what he does nor does not do in honor of the Lord.

Romans 14:7-9 - We continue our discussion of conduct in relation to issues not commanded nor prohibited by scripture. These issues are regulated by principles rather than specific commandments, i.e. precepts. We have seen that we are not to judge one another regarding these issues (Romans 14:3-4) but follow the principles for their use. With regard to specific commandments, we are to judge one another (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). Our lives and our deaths are not for ourselves and our honor but are for the Lord and His honor. As we decide our conduct concerning these issues not commanded nor prohibited by scripture, we must be sure that

our choice is for the Lord's honor and not our own honor. The Lord Jesus Christ's ownership of us does not end at death nor does it begin at death. He is Lord of our lives whether we are alive or dead. Christ's death enabled Him to be Lord of the dead and His resurrection enabled Him to be Lord of the living. We are to live for Christ's honor while we are alive and when we die to die in a way that honors Him.

Romans 14:10-12 – We continue our discussion of conduct in relation to issues not commanded nor prohibited by scripture. The believer with the restrictive conscience (e.g. eats only vegetables to avoid any possibility of eating meat sacrificed to idols) is not to use this standard to judge other believers whose conscience and conduct are less restrictive. By the same token, the believer with the less restrictive conscience (e.g. anything including meat that may have been sacrificed to idols) is not to use his freedom to despise or put down other believers. All believers will stand in front of God's judgment seat to be judged concerning our conduct throughout our Christian life. That will also include the choices that we made with regard to issues not commanded or forbidden by scripture. We are told that we will have to give an account to God for actions or lack of action. This is not a judgment to decide whether we go to heaven or hell. That was decided when we trusted Christ for salvation (John 3:18, 36). We have been delivered from any judgment of condemnation (John 5:24; Romans 8:1, 33-34). This judgment will be to determine what rewards, if any, that we have acquired by our deeds (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). God will also in the future require that everyone will kneel before Him to confess that He is God. There is one command in this passage that for which we can hold each other accountable. We are commanded not to judge or show contempt for believers who differ from us in what their faith or conscience allows or prohibits them to do.

Romans 14:13 - We continue looking at God's guidance concerning matters not commanded or prohibited by scripture. Because we are going to appear before God for judgment (not for heaven or hell but reward or non-reward), we are again reminded to not judge those who are less restrictive or more restrictive in their convictions regarding these matters. A church cannot and should not confront individual believer's choices on these matters, but they should confront believers who judge other believers' convictions on these matters. Again, we need to be reminded that we are to judge one another if it is a matter prohibited or commanded by scripture (1 Corinthians 5:9-13). An important guiding principle is that

each individual believer should make a decision or commitment not to do anything that would cause another believer to sin or that would hinder them from doing what God's word commands. This would include both types of matters. We should not do anything that would cause them to disobey or hinder them from obeying scripture or their personal convictions regarding things not commanded or prohibited by scripture. This principle of not causing another believer to sin or hinder them from obedience is not a matter of accountability to the local church but directly to the Lord Jesus when we are judged at His coming. We must be careful to apply this principle because it has implications for our quality of life in the life to come in the 1000 yearly kingdom and our eternity in heaven.

Romans 14:14-15 – We continue our discussion of issues not commanded or forbidden by scripture in the broad context of what it means to live a yielded Christian life. The specific issue was the eating or non-eating of meats sacrificed to idols. On these type of questions where God's word does not command or prohibit an action, nothing is wrong in and of itself. However, if a believer thinks that his or her behavior is wrong in relation to one of these issues because it violates the conscience, then it is wrong for that believer. For us, that means any choice that we make in these non-commanded matters is a matter of freedom so long as our conscience does not forbid it. However, if our behavior on one of these non-commanded issues harms our fellow-believers then we are not showing them love. This harm would be in the context of emboldening them to violate their conscience. We are challenged to not let what we choose to do concerning non-commanded matters bring spiritual ruin to our fellow-believer in terms of lost blessings and fellowship with God now and lost rewards in the future. Referring to the fellow-believer as "one for whom Christ died" emphasizes the effective aspect of His death rather than the sufficient aspect. From the sufficient standpoint Christ died for all people (1 John 2:2; John 1:29). From the effective aspect, Christ death only helps an individual if they appropriate it by faith in Him. Before deciding to do something not commanded or forbidden by scripture, ask yourself these two questions: (1) Will it violate my conscience? (2) Will it harm other believers?

Romans 14:16-17 - As yielded believers, we are told that when we act in keeping with our conscience regarding an issue not commanded or forbidden by scripture to be sure that what we do does not harm another believer spiritually or otherwise. For that reason we do not want what we

would consider to be good to be spoken of as evil because it harmed another believer spiritually. Living under God's authority as a subject in His kingdom is not just doing our own thing on non-commanded issues. The examples used here are eating meat sacrificed to idols or drinking of wine. Living as a subject of God's kingdom is first of all righteousness or living in harmony with God's standards. These standards include obeying His commandments plus following His principles and obeying our conscience on these gray areas not covered by commandments. Secondly, living as subject of God's kingdom rule is to choose what is going to promote peace or harmony with other believers. Thirdly it involves choosing to do what will promote the joy of other believers as well as our own joy. We are not alone in these choices. We are to do so in harmony with the Holy Spirit's guidance and filling. In this way He can empower us in making and carrying out the best choice.

Romans 14:18-21 - As a yielded believer following God's directions for handling life choices regarding non-commanded issues, we serve Christ rather than ourselves. We give up rights in order to keep from harming other believers and so gain approval of people as well as pleasing God. For this reason, we are to make every effort to pursue – not just dabble at – peace with one another as believers. Getting along is far more important than getting our own way on these areas of freedom (not commanded by God's word). We are also to be concerned not with changing the conscience thresholds of other believers but instead to be concerned about the more important issue of promoting and building the likeness of Christ in each other as believers. We do not want to ruin the working of God in the lives of other believers by choosing to do what we want on some issue not commanded by scripture. The example given is food offered to idols. It is wrong or sinful to do something that is not commanded by God's word if it causes them to sin. The good is in restraining ourselves from doing anything in these gray areas (not controlled by God's commands) which would cause a fellow-believer to sin.

Romans 14:22-23 – We continue looking at what the yielded believer is to do with regard to issues not covered by the commandments and prohibitions of scripture. When other believers are not affected our conviction concerning the issue is between us and God. God blesses us for doing what we have decided is right in such situations. However, if we have doubts as to the rightness of a choice on one of these issues (The example here is eating meat sacrificed to idols), and we go ahead and do

it, we are sinning because we are not following the convictions of our conscience. Anytime we choose to do something that we believe is wrong, we are sinning. When we fail to believe and obey God's word, it is sin; and when we do not believe and obey our conscience, it is sin and a failure of our faith.

I. Pleasing others and not ourselves to
imitate Christ (Romans 15:1-6)

Romans 15:1-3 – We continue looking at our conduct in relation to issues of conscience (less restrictive contrasted with more restrictive) rather than issues of commandment. These are an outflow of a committed Christian life. The believer with the less restrictive conscience is to tolerate or bear with the scruples of those whose conscience is more restrictive. The emphasis is surrendering rights to do everything or anything that conscience may allow in relation to non-commanded issues. The believer with the less restrictive conscience is to not be focused on pleasing himself on non-commanded issues. The focus is to please the one whose conscience is restrictive (be he a believer or unbeliever – note the use of the word “neighbor”) for his spiritual benefit which will edify or strengthen him. In the case of the unbeliever, it will help him to possibly trust Christ for salvation (1 Corinthians 10:33). In the case of the believer, it will help him to become more like Christ. In this way we imitate Christ who chose not to please Himself in these areas concerning non-commanded issues. He even chose to bear the insults of those who insulted God.

Romans 15:4 - We keep looking at the committed Christian's obligation to not please himself because Jesus lived in that way. Jesus instead of pleasing Himself had taken insults directed toward God upon Himself according to the Old Testament scriptures. The idea is that this prophecy concerning Jesus was also written to teach us and encourage us. As we persevere in not pleasing ourselves in these non-commanded matters as well as in commanded matters, it makes it possible to have confidence regarding the future. This future is when we are raised and/or transformed to be like Christ at His coming (1 John 3:2; Philippians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) and then appear before His judgment seat (Luke 14:14; Romans 14:10). This verse also provides us guidance in interpreting and applying the Old Testament scriptures to our lives. While no Old Testament scripture has direct application to believers living under the New Covenant unless it is repeated in the New Covenant, we must

remember that all scripture including all of the Old Covenant is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness. In that way, the Old Testament offers instruction and encouragement to those of us living under the New Covenant so that as we persevere, we will look forward with more expectation and anticipation for the appearing of Jesus at His second coming.

Romans 15:5-6 - The ability to endure and the encouragement of the scriptures come from God. Likewise, the mindset to live to please others for the benefit of Christ is given by God. This mindset or attitude is like that of Jesus. This enablement helps us to think with the mind of Christ rather than our own mind (i.e. to forsake our thoughts for God's thoughts – Isaiah 55:6-9) and to communicate to others and each other in such a way that God the Father is glorified. The Christian life is not about thinking and speaking to please ourselves. It is to point people toward the majesty (unexceeded greatness) of God and make Him alone the center of attention and importance to ourselves and others. Notice that Paul prayed for believers to demonstrate this attitude. We should do likewise.

J. Accept one another to glorify God
(Romans 15:7-14)

Romans 15:7 - Because as committed believers we are to live to please others concerning non-commanded issue for Christ's sake and by doing so to glorify God, we are to show and demonstrate acceptance toward one another as believers. This acceptance is to be regardless of whether their conscience restrictiveness is greater or less than ours. Christ accepted those of us who trusted Him as Savior. He did this so that God would be glorified. Again Christ stands as the model for not living to please ourselves. He also stands as a model for doing it in such a way that it will bring God glory. Jesus' life and ministry were not about seeking His own glory but the glory of God (John 7:18). Acceptance of one another is not always easy, but we must remember that Jesus accepted us with all our flaws and baggage and made us a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) for the purpose of doing good works (Ephesians 2:10) in such a way that the light of this new life we received shines to the glory of our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Romans 15:8-12 - Acceptance of one another in Romans 15:7 included the acceptance of Jewish believers for the non-Jews, i.e. Gentiles and

acceptance of Gentile believers for the Jewish believers. The reason for this was the focus of the ministry of Christ. Jesus had become a servant to the Jewish people for God's truth so that the promises made to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) might be confirmed or guaranteed as to their truth, reality and fulfillment. Part of those promises were fulfilled at Christ's first coming and most will be fulfilled at Christ's second coming. His servanthood to the Jews was to move the Gentiles to glorify God for including them as recipients of His mercy. The Old Testament supports the idea that God would receive glory through and from the Gentiles for including them in His salvation plan. In 2 Samuel 22:50 David as king and by extension His greatest descendent Jesus Christ would offer verbal and musical praise to God among the Gentiles. The Gentiles were invited in Deuteronomy 32:43 to share the joy of God's chosen people the Jews, i.e. Israel. In Psalm 117:1 all peoples including the Gentiles are invited to praise God in word and song. Isaiah 11:10 pointed out that Christ's kingdom would include His rule over the nations, i.e. Gentiles, and that they would count on Christ for their future. The word "root" simply means an ancestor of Jesse from whom came King David would rule over them. That root is Christ (Revelation 22:13-16). Christ is the branch of David and Jesse as far as His humanity is concerned (Mt. 1:1), and Christ is the root of Jesse and David as far as His deity is concerned (Mic. 5:2). These passages reinforce the importance of believers being inclusive and accepting of one another. Christ's acceptance of the Gentiles is the model.

Romans 15:13 - In looking at the yielded Christian life, there is a model for looking at what God wants to do in our lives. There is also a model of how we need to be praying for one another. This goal is for the present life as shown by the word "now." We look to God who gives us our future expectation to fill us with joy. Notice that it is all joy meaning complete joy. It is not based on circumstances but on Christ alone because in Him we are complete (Colossians 2:10). Our need is be filled with His peace not just to have peace with God which we have when we trust Christ as Savior (Romans 5:1). It is the peace of heart that flows from a life of obedience (Isaiah 48:18, 22). It is not like the peace that the world gives which is based on circumstances (John 14:27) but it the peace of Christ. The idea is to be filled with this peace. This happens as we continue to trust God (the present tense of "believing" emphasizes continual action in the Greek) for the problems and difficulties of life. As we do so, we activate the power of the Holy Spirit which accomplishes God's working in and for us. The

outcome is that our anticipation concerning the future (referred to as “hope”) abounds or increases. Another way that we can use this verse is in praying this prayer for one another as believers. We all want to see joy and peace to their fullest extent in our lives. By prayer and persevering faith we unleash the power of the Holy Spirit to this end.

Romans 15:14 - Despite the fact that believers need instruction on how to live a committed Christian life, they are to be full of goodness in terms of doing good works. 1 Timothy 6:18 speaks of the need to be rich in good works. Believers are to be filled with all knowledge. This does not mean that God expects us to be all-knowing. It does mean that we are to be as knowledgeable as we can be concerning God’s word. God’s people cannot effectively carry out their role as priests without that knowledge according to Hosea 4:6. If we are full of knowledge without being full of good works and love, then we will get the big head (1 Corinthians 8:1). Knowledge is the food of God’s word and goodness or good works is the exercise. Notice the balance in this verse. The word for goodness emphasizes that what we do in relation to others has positive spiritual benefit. When we have this balance, we will find ourselves like the Roman Christians being able to admonish one another. The Greek word for admonish includes instruction but it also includes the idea of warning other believers of the consequences – possible or otherwise – of their choices. By doing this, we help one another to stay within the boundaries of God’s word and not move off into manmade solutions for ordering our lives.

K. Missionary work requires planning and participation Romans 15:15-33)

Romans 15:15-16 - The importance of communicating God’s word with boldness is very important. First of all, it requires boldness to effectively tell unbelievers how to be saved (Acts 4:29, 31; Ephesians 6:19). It takes boldness to confront counterfeit believers with the truth of God’s word so that it exposes their false profession of faith. Examples of this include Matthew 7:21-23; 1 John 2:19, 29; 3:6-10, 14-15; 5:4-5; Hebrews 12:8. It takes boldness to confront believers who are carnal and acting like unsaved people in certain aspects of their lives (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). It takes boldness to work to restore a believer who is disobeying God’s word without repentance (Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:3-4; Galatians 6:1-2). It takes boldness to tell an otherwise spiritually-minded believer of their sin so that they will change course (Acts 13:22 cp. 2 Samuel 12:1-9). It takes

boldness to speak the truth to unbelievers when you are reasonably certain that they will reject the message and possibly harm you (Acts 7:51-60). It takes boldness to tell an old man that he is going to be severely disciplined for his sin especially if he has mentored you in the word of God (1 Samuel 3:11-18). If we rightly divide God's word (2 Timothy 2:15), we are to speak the truth of God's word with love (Ephesians 4:15) knowing that love seeks to edify (1 Corinthians 8:1).

In communicating God's word, there is going to be repetition and overlap. Why does God repeat information in so many parts of scripture? The fact is that we all need to be reminded. The late John Walvoord, president of Dallas Theological Seminary, was asked by someone, why he was so diligent to be in church to listen to the preaching and teaching of God's word especially when he had taught many of those he went to hear. His reply was, "We all need to be reminded." We may be a pastor, Sunday school teacher or just working with an individual in a discipling relationship. In Philippians 3:1 we are told that to repeat information from God's word is not meant to be tedious, but it is meant to be safe. Titus 3:1 instructs those who share God's word to remind other believers to be subject to those in authority, to live obedient lives and to be prepared for every kind of good work, to speak evil of no one, to get along with others, to be yielding and demonstrating complete humility. 2 Timothy 1:6-7 reminds us of the need to stir up the gift of God within us, speaking of the gift of the Holy Spirit. 2 Tim. 2:11-14 reminds us to be aware of our death with Christ and His resurrection, our need to endure that we may reign with Christ, our need to show ourselves to be true believers by not denying Christ, and that Christ remains faithful even when we do not trust Him as we should for the issues of daily living. Finally 2 Peter 1:12-15 emphasizes the need to be reminded that the character qualities in 2 Peter 1:5-7 need to grow so that we: are not unfruitful, have a greater assurance of our salvation and a rewarded entrance into heaven. 2 Peter 3:1-2 tells us that we need to be reminded of the words of the prophets in the Old Testament and the commandments of Christ through the Apostles in the New Testament. The more we are reminded, the more likely we are to have the faith we need (Romans 10:17) and to obey what we know and to experience freedom from sin (John 8:31-34).

One of the clarifications is that our service or ministry to Christ has direction and purpose. In Paul's case, his service was to the Gentiles. Our ministry that is given to us is given and empowered (1 Corinthians 15:10) by God's

grace. God's grace is simply His goodness conferred on us that we do not deserve. This passage goes on to teach us that sharing the gospel, i.e. telling others how to be saved is our duty or obligation to God as priests. The people who trust Christ as a result of our sharing the gospel become an offering to God made by us as priests. This offering is acceptable to God because it has set apart for God's purpose (=meaning of the word "sanctified") by the Holy Spirit. Everyone of us has been brought to Christ by someone and as a result are some believer's priestly offering. We are set apart for God's purpose at the moment we trust Christ as Savior and this is done by the Holy Spirit (Acts 26:18 cp. 1 Corinthians 6:11). In the Greek this sanctification or setting apart occurred in the past at the point we trusted Christ with ongoing results so that in our standing before God, we are as holy as we will ever be. Since we have a holy (same Greek word as "sanctified") calling (2 Timothy 1:9), we need to live our lives in a manner worthy of that calling (Ephesians 4:1).

We have seen that one of our priestly duties is share the gospel with the unsaved and that those we bring to Christ are our offering to God. 1 Peter 2:5, 9 and Revelation 1:6 states that we are a priesthood, a kingdom of priests and that we are to offer spiritual sacrifices to God and proclaim the excellencies and praises of God. It goes on to say that these sacrifices are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, our high priest. The first sacrifice that we as believers are to make is yielding control of our body and by implication our lives to God (Romans 12:1) to fully activate and actualize the Lordship of Christ over us. Hebrews 13:15-16 speak of praise, sharing and doing good as sacrifices that we are to make. Philippians 4:18 speaks of giving to missionaries as one of our important sacrifices. Our faith is a sacrifice according to Philippians 2:17 and in some cases may require our life itself. Psalm 4:5 states that choosing to do right is a sacrifice. Psalm 51:17 speaks of the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart especially when confessing our sins. Malachi 2:7 reminds us that as priests, we are to preserve the knowledge of God's ways and thoughts set forth in His word and that we should be messengers of God. We have been made priests. We need to be busy in carrying out our responsibilities.

Romans 15:17-20 - In our service to God in reaching people for Christ and then discipling them, we need to be sure to glory in Christ and not ourselves or our own abilities. If we must speak of anything that we have done, we must speak of what Christ has accomplished through us in leading people to obey the gospel by placing their faith in Christ (see

Romans 10:16 in the NKJV). Notice that what we say and do is important. Our message must not cancel the gospel nor should it cloud the gospel. Our life must show strong adherence to scriptural commandments. In some cases God will work miracles. We have seen this happen in areas where Christ was unknown according to missionaries. The power of signs and wonders confirms the reality of the gospel. Signs are miracles that show God's message and wonders are miracles that show God's greatness. The power of the Holy Spirit is vitally working in the one speaking the gospel as well as in the hearts and lives of the hearers. One of the aims of evangelism is to try to present the message to people who have not previously heard. It is okay to speak the gospel where it has been spoken before (1 Corinthians 3:5-8) but in planning evangelistic and missions outreach, it is best presented to those who have not heard it.

Romans 15:21 - The activity of Paul in reaching out with the gospel follows a pattern set forth in the Old Testament. This is not saying that what he did fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy concerning Christ. It simply follows a pattern describing how the Messiah would be made known to those who had not been told about Christ. They would see Christ clearly set forth in the preaching of the gospel (Galatians 3:1). They would also understand who Jesus was and what He did. We are going to encounter people who either have not ever heard the gospel or people who did not hear it correctly and accurately presented. Our job is be sure that they are told in a way that they can clearly see who Jesus is and what He did for them. In order for people to understand, we must pray to that end and enlist prayer for this as well (Colossians 4:2-4). Hearing the gospel is absolutely essential in order for people to believe (Romans 10:17). We must ask ourselves, do we know people who have not heard or understood. We must determine based on God's word and the leading of the Holy Spirit what He would have us do – going to those who are close by and praying for, financing others or even e-mailing to reach those who are not close by.

Romans 15:22-24 – Paul because of preaching in areas where the gospel and Christ were unknown had been delayed in making a visit to the Christians in Rome. Often believers find themselves facing the dilemma of being led to serve one group of people and not being able to fellowship with other believers on the level that they desire. As in this case, Paul was planning to visit these believers and minister among them. However, his plan was to take the offering of Grecian and Macedonian churches to Jerusalem for the believers there and then to go to Rome. He did not count

on being arrested in Jerusalem and taken to Rome as a prisoner. As believers we make plans to connect in certain ways with other believers, but the steps we take are not the ones we planned but what God has planned. In Rome Paul planned on preaching the gospel (Romans 1:14-16) and probably having fellowship with them to be sure that they were following a course of living to honor Christ. The purpose of preaching the gospel was to reach others who had not been reached and to be sure that some who had made professions truly understood the issue. He was also hoping for provisions or support for a missionary journey to the Roman province of Spain. It was customary for believers to get to the mission field by going from church to church on their way to raise support (3 John 1:5-8). We must learn from this passage to accept delays, to do the tasks that God has called us to do first and then proceed with any plans that we had to put on hold.

Romans 15:25-29 - One of the purposes for which believers give money to God's work is helping other believers in poor congregations with material needs. One of the ways that we can do this is through such organizations as Samaritan's Purse. In the case of the congregations in Achaia (southern Greece) and Macedonia (northern Greece and the area north of Greece), they owed the Jewish believers who had shared their spiritual blessings (to deliver them from eternity in hell) through Paul and his associates to share their material blessings (helping them to physically survive). As believers, if we have the means and see the need, we are to give to materially help believers who are in need in other churches or our own church (1 John 3:17-18). We also see the attitude with which the money was given. It is said that the believers were pleased to do this giving. They did it as an act of debt whereas usually the giving to other believers in need is an act of faith and love (James 2:15-16 cp. 1 John 3:17-18). We also see that money given to God's work requires oversight as it mentions making sure that they receive this contribution. When we fellowship with other believers to bring them spiritual benefit (Romans 1:11), Christ blesses that coming together in fellowship. Our aim in meeting with other believers is not mainly one of receiving but of giving spiritual benefit to them.

Romans 15:30-33 - One of the ways that we can be involved in the work of missionaries is to pray for them. Like all believers, they are involved in a spiritual struggle. By praying for them, we enter into that struggle. This practice needs to be encouraged (The Greek word for "urge" is elsewhere

translated “encourage”). This commitment to pray for missionaries is to be accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and the enablement He provides and motivated by the love that the Holy Spirit produces in our lives when we let Him have the controls. Notice there are specific requests in this prayer: (1) being kept safe from unbelievers who would oppose or discourage the ministry, (2) The favorable acceptance of the financial aid by the believers in the area where he is going, (3) The purpose is so that when missionaries come to meet with us they may come with joy and be refreshed by our fellowship. Finally, we need to pray for those who are praying with us in our spiritual struggles that they may experience God's presence as a God who gives peace.

L. Recognize other believers and their contribution
to God's work (Romans 16:1-16)

Romans 16:1-2 - In God's work, we find it helpful to recommend another believer to a particular church with whom we are communicating. In recommending another believer, it is important that we know how she or he is exercising her or his spiritual gift. It is important that believers receive such an individual in a way that is consistent with the close fellowship of believers. It is helpful to also alert those to whom we are communicating what they need to do for the person that you are recommending and to explain to them whom he or she has helped. It is important for leaders in a church to give recognition to other believers who are working behind the scenes and might otherwise be unknown. This encourages other believers with less visible gifts to be exercising and using their unique spiritual gift.

Romans 16:3-7 - It is important to notice the need for friendliness and recognition of and among believers. Paul mentions Priscilla as fellow workers in Christ and the fact that they risked their lives to save Paul's life. While it is not mentioned what they did, it is significant that what they did called for Paul and the churches to give thanks for their courage and their action. 1 John 3:16, we are commanded that because Christ laid down His life for us that we should lay down our lives for one another as believers. This is how God's love is shown among us and to the watching world. We notice also that churches often met in homes as noted here and in 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:2. The church in Ephesus met at the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:1, 9). The term firstfruits to Christ meant that this man was the first convert in Achaia (southern Greece) with many others following. This term is used in Revelation 14:1-5

to describe the 144, 000 Jews sealed in Revelation 7:1-8 who will be the first ones to be saved during the future 7 year tribulation. The Mary who is mentioned here is recognized for the labor she performed for Paul and his associates. Andronicus and Junias were recognized as fellow Jews and people who had been in prison with Paul. These people had suffered for Christ. They were also held in high regard among the Apostles, and as Paul noted, had been believers before he had trusted Christ. We need to ask ourselves. Who do we need to give recognition to and what is their notable place in God's work? If we respond to this question, we apply the teaching of this passage.

Romans 16:8-16 - The emphasis continues on recognizing one another as believers and focusing on some specific concerning that believer. One is a dear friend showing that sometimes relationships in the body of Christ also end up as close friendships such as that which existed between David and Jonathan. The term co-worker emphasizes that we recognize that we cannot do the work of the Lord alone. One believer was recognized because his faithfulness to Christ had truly passed the test. Those who are in a family household who are believers need to also be recognized. People who have come from a background where the gospel was largely rejected also need to be recognized as here the example of a Herodian, a fellow Jew. Those who work hard in the Lord and very hard in the Lord need to be noted. The fact that we are chosen in the Lord is worthy of recognition. This becomes abundantly clear as we see certain believers growing in doing good works (2 Peter 1:5-11). Another believer is recognized for being a second mother to one. The recognition of each other as the people set apart for God's purpose is vital as well. Finally, we need to greet one another in a special way. The holy kiss was reserved for members of the same sex and is mentioned here and in 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14. The kiss was a customary greeting in the culture of the time (Luke 7:45). Today, a handshake is probably the most equivalent practice in our culture. Hopefully, this gives each of us ideas by which we can express recognition and appreciation of fellow believers in an open way.

M. Words of warning, encouragement and praise
(Romans 16:17-27)

Romans 16:17 - Believers have a responsibility to turn away from certain people. This means that we cannot have Christian fellowship with them.

This also means that we should not be in a dating or engagement for marriage relationship with them or even a close friendship. We are to watch these people carefully to make sure that they do not make inroads in our lives or the lives of other believers. We must be careful in applying this commandment though. People who profess to be Christians must not cause dissensions or hindrances by teachings, writings or practices that are contrary to the teaching we have learned, i.e. God's word. We may cause dissensions or hindrances by teachings, writings and practices that are in agreement with God's word. Examples of divisive doctrines that are contrary to God's word would be soul sleep, the denial of the eternality of hell and that salvation can be lost. Notice that Paul urged (same Greek word as "encouraged") the believers to do this. We should always be encouraging other believers to implement this commandment in relationships and especially with those who profess to be Christians.

Romans 16:18 – This verse continues the command in Romans 16:17. It gives us reasons why we are to avoid professing believers who cause divisions and hindrances contrary to God's word. These people are not slaves of Jesus Christ. This means that they are not committed to obeying Him and His word. They are slaves of their own appetites or desires. This means that their speaking, teaching and behavior is controlled by these desires rather than by Christ. These people deceive the thinking of those who are unsuspecting or simple. This means that they make their teaching or conduct appear to be in harmony with God's word when it really is not. There are two ways that they accomplish this. One is by smooth talk. They make good appear to be evil and evil to be good (Isaiah 5:20). This means that what they say sounds good and right but is actually as wrong as it can be. They do not teach the milk or the meat of the word. They teach the bologna of the word (that which purports to be God's word but in reality is contrary to God's word). The word "smooth" is also translated "kind." Normally kindness is something done to make things easier. However, in the bad sense the word means that which makes it easier to accept teaching and conduct contrary to God's word. The second way that they accomplish this deception is by flattering their hearers. Proverbs 28:23 warns us that it is better to be rebuked than flattered, and Proverbs 29:5 warns us that the one who flatters is spreading a net for our feet. Jude 1:16 tells us that those who flatter want to use us for their own advantage. Beware of those teachers who focus on telling you what you want to hear rather than telling you the plain truth of God's word.

Romans 16:19-20 - The believers at Rome had a testimony. Their obedience was well known among all groups of people. This needs to be true of every believer and every Bible-believing local church. When we see believers and groups of believers living lives obedient to God's word, this is a reason to rejoice. However, in light of the warning in Romans 16:17-18, believers need to be wise in what is good. To be wise in what is good is to know what is good and behave accordingly. At the same time believers need to be innocent in what is evil. We must be careful not to become too enthralled with the details of evil acts lest we be enticed to be involved in them (see Deuteronomy 12:30 for an example). At the same time, we need to know enough and be discerning enough so that we are not pulled into sinful activities and beliefs (Matthew 10:16). Satan may appear to have the upper hand in this world but God promises that he will soon be crushed under our feet. The Greek word translated "soon" does not mean that it will happen right away but it does mean that it will happen quickly when it happens. In the meantime, we are to pray for the grace of the Lord Jesus to be with us and with our fellow believers because that grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) when we are down the most at our weakest because it brings forth the demonstration and reality of Christ's power in our lives.

Romans 16:21-24 - The theme of recognizing other believers is again emphasized. There were believers other than Paul who were concerned about the Roman believers. Timothy was recognized as a fellow-worker who was accompanying Paul and helping with the ministry of God's word. Paul points out that the three Jewish believers were certainly wanting to wish them well. This shows that the church needs to truly reach out across cultural and racial boundaries. The man who wrote the letter for Paul likewise wanted to wish them well. Gaius who was providing lodging for Paul and was hosting the church in his home obviously was concerned and expressed his connection to these believers. Even the city treasurer had become a believer and expressed his concern and connection to these people. This also shows that it is not unscriptural for a believer to hold government office or to work for the government. Quartus is not given any other designation than being a brother. This means that he had received Christ by faith and was a child of God (John 1:12). The prayer and desire for the working of God's grace in their lives was again expressed. It is this grace that enables our service (1 Corinthians 15:10) and that is available through prayer in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Romans 16:25-27 – A prayer of praise is offered to God because He is the one who can stabilize those of us who have trusted Christ for salvation. This is in harmony with the gospel message and with what was preached about Christ. This message and the preaching about Christ are both in harmony with the truth presently revealed in the New Testament which was not known in the Old Testament. The mystery was never the fact that the Gentiles would be saved. The mystery was that they would be part of the same body on an equal footing before God with the Jews who were saved (Ephesians 3:4-6). In using the scriptures of the Old Testament prophets this gospel has been made known to the nations (better the Gentiles) leading to the obedience of faith. This is simply the fact that when a person trusts Christ for salvation, he is obeying the gospel by believing on Christ (see Romans 10:16 in the NKJV). Keep in mind this presentation of the gospel was at God's command for Paul and his associates and for us as well. Through Jesus Christ God the Father is to be given glory forever because He is uniquely wise. For this reason we can go to Him prayer for wisdom when facing the problems of life (James 1:2-5).