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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

WHERE PAUL GREETES THE CHURCH AT ROME AND INTRODUCES THE GOSPEL OF GOD

ROMANS 1:1-7

I. Background: The letter of Romans was written by the Apostle Paul. It was written probably in the spring of 57 A.D. from Corinth toward the end of his third missionary journey. We know these facts from both history and the Bible working together.

A. Known historical facts:

1. Emperor Claudius reigned in Rome from 41-54 A.D. and he ordered the Jews to leave Rome due to trouble around 49 A.D.
2. Historian Suetonius (69 to 140 A.D.) writes the Jews left because of "disturbances of the instigation of Chrestus (Christ)."
3. Ambrosiaster (4th Century) writes that the church of Rome was not established by an apostle but by unnamed Hebrew Christians.

B. Known Biblical facts:

1. The Bible outlines the movements of Aquilla and Priscilla after being forced to leave Rome. They ministered the gospel with the Apostle Paul, then returned to Rome before Romans was written (Acts 18:1-4, 18, 26; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:3).
2. The Bible outlines the movements of the Apostle Paul in great detail (Acts 9:1-18, Acts 18:1-12, 19:8-10, 20:1-3 Greece is where he probably wrote Romans; Romans 15:23-25.)

II. Theme and Purpose: The Apostle Paul writes Romans to a predominately Gentile church (Romans 1:13) for the purpose of making the gospel and salvation clear (Romans 1:1, 9, 16, 17, chapters 1-8). While accomplishing his main theme, he wants to explain how Israel fits into God's plan (Romans chapters 9-11) and how believing Jews and Gentiles should now live out true spiritual worship in this New Covenant time period (Romans chapters 12-16).

III. Exegeting (drawing the meaning out) Romans 1:1-7. Paul greets the church at Rome and introduces the gospel of God.

A. The Apostle Paul identifies himself to the believers in Rome in three ways (verse 1).

1. He is a servant of Christ Jesus. Servant is the Greek word "doulos" and can be translated also as bondservant. The word emphasizes the idea of Paul's great debt to his master Jesus whom he belongs to in order to carry out his assigned service. Christ (Messiah, Anointed One) Jesus (Savior) is brought quickly into Paul's opening sentence because it is only through Him that this wonderful gospel exists and to which he is called.
2. He is an apostle which means "a sent one." He was sent by Jesus.

3. He is set apart for the gospel which is the good news "euangelion" of God. In other words, preaching the message that Jesus Christ died for a person's sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that on the third day He rose from the dead according to the Scriptures (as 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4 says is the gospel) is what Paul refers to as the good news or gospel of God.

THOUGHT: Look at the different times and ways that the Apostle Paul uses the gospel of God (Romans 1:1, 15:16), the gospel of His Son (Romans 1:9), the gospel of Christ (Romans 15:19), the gospel (Romans 1:15, 16; 15:20) and my gospel (Romans 16:25). What significance is there to each of these expressions?

B. The Apostle Paul identifies the specific person which the gospel message is all about as Jesus Christ our Lord (verses 2-6).

1. He is the person whom the prophets in the Old Testament Scriptures promised was coming (verse 2; Genesis 3:15; Psalms 2:1-12, 40:6-10, 110:1; Isaiah 45:14-29, 52:1-53:12).
2. He is the preexistent Son who was always part of the eternal trinity of Yahweh God (verse 3a; Romans 8:3, 32; Psalms 2:1-12; John 1:1, 2; Colossians 1:19, 2:9; Hebrews 1:2).
3. He is the prophesied descendent of David according to the flesh which theologically is called His incarnation or human nature (verse 3b; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Matthew 1:6; Luke 3:31).
4. He is declared in His resurrection from the dead to have accomplished the work the Father had given the Son to do through the Holy Spirit so completely as to be in a more exalted way Jesus Christ "our Lord" (verse 4). Through His exaltation as the 100 percent God and 100 percent human sitting at the right hand of the Father in His new body, He has the power to make His believers children of Yahweh God (John 1:12; Romans 8:14-16) and heirs of His Kingdom throughout eternity (Romans 8:17; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 21, 45; 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18).
5. He is currently pouring out His grace toward all the nations bringing individual believers to Himself (verses 5, 6; Hebrews 7:25; Revelation 1:17, 18).

C. The Apostle Paul greets the church at Rome and refers to them as beloved ones "agapatois" and holy ones "hagiois" or saints. These are words for every believer because of the work and calling of Jesus Christ our Lord. He also desires Yahweh's grace (unmerited favor) and peace (from the Hebrew word Shalom) for them (verse 7).

THE THEME OF THE BOOK

THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES

ROMANS 1:8-17

- I. The Apostle Paul has desired to preach the gospel in Rome but has so far been prevented from doing so (Romans 1:8-15).
 - A. Paul is thankful to God for the faith that the church in Rome has and that it is being proclaimed in all the world (verse 8).
 1. This is the second time (Romans 1:5) that the word faith is used in this letter to the Roman church which became what we now call the book of Romans. Faith is an important word in the book of Romans. It comes from the Greek noun "pistis" which means believe, trust, and have confidence in.
 2. At this time (approximately 57 A.D.), Rome is the capital city of the Roman Empire and therefore the most important city of the civilized world. As people travel in and out of Rome, the faith of this church in the message of Jesus Christ is spreading far and wide.
 - B. Paul had been praying for the believers in Rome and planning on coming to Rome to encourage them and further the gospel work among the Gentiles for a long time (verses 9-15).
 1. Most Bible scholars put the date of the conversion of the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus to be between 31-36 A.D. At that point, the prophet Ananias informed Paul that he had been chosen to be a special messenger to primarily the Gentiles (non-Jewish people) in Acts 9:15 and Acts 22:21. So for over 20 years the Apostle Paul had been used to reach other Gentile areas with the gospel message but had never made it to the capital city of Rome. He had been praying for the believers at Rome on a regular basis (verses 9, 10).
 2. Paul desired to be used by the Lord to encourage them by the spiritual gifts given to him by God for the building up of the body of Christ (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 4:7-13) as well as for them to encourage him (verses 11, 12).
 3. Paul's calling to reach the Gentiles with the gospel compelled him and he felt obligated to reach as many as possible for the sake of the Lord's harvest (verse 13; John 4:34-38).
 4. The Gentile world at the time consisted of two groups, Greek speaking mainly inside the Roman Empire and non-Greek speaking people mainly outside the Roman Empire. At the time, all non-Greek speakers were referred to as barbarians (from the Greek word "barbaros"). The word was formed to sound like the unintelligible speech pattern such as "bar-bar" as heard by the refined Greek speakers. Greek speakers viewed themselves as wise and all others as foolish or ignorant ("anoatos" Greek). Paul was eager to preach the gospel to them all! (verses 14, 15)

THOUGHT: As a believer, have you come to a point in your journey as to know your God-given spiritual gift or gifts? Have you ever sensed an obligation to use your spiritual gift or gifts in a church setting or a specific people group setting? Take a moment and thank God for sending the Apostle Paul and others to preach the gospel.

II. Theme: The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (verses 16, 17).

A. The Apostle Paul is not ashamed of the gospel and neither should any other believer (verse 16a).

1. The word ashamed means to feel without strength or disgraced in the eyes of someone else or people. If Paul let himself, he could have let the simple and scriptural message of Jesus death, burial, and resurrection for our sins be a stumbling block. The self-proclaimed wise people of his day laughed and scoffed at such a simple message (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2 Corinthians 11:1-7; Galatians 1:6-12).
2. The gospel is the Greek word "euangelion" and is translated good news or good message. The word gospel comes from the Old English word "godspel" where "god" means good and "spel" means story or message. The gospel is the good news message coming from Scripture of how the only God Yahweh would redeem a believing people through His only Son and Messiah.

B. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (verse 16b).

1. It's the power of God to accomplish His salvation purposes. The word power does come from the Greek word "dunamis" but it does not mean the English word dynamite in this context because it was used here way before dynamite was invented in 1867 A.D. It does mean Yahweh God's omnipotent (all powerful) might, strength, and force to accomplish His objectives.
2. For those who believe (have faith in it, receive it), it brings salvation (deliverance). Salvation ("sozo") involves past (Ephesians 2:8), present (2 Corinthians 2:15), and future (Romans 13:11) aspects.

C. The gospel is given to the Jew first and also to the Greek (verse 16c). Since Yahweh God's plan and person of salvation came through Israel, Jesus and the apostles offered the gospel message first to the Jewish people (Luke 24:49; John 4:22; Acts 1:4, 8; 2:39; Romans 3:1, chapters 9-11) and then to the Greek people (which in this context includes all non-Jews).

D. In the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to or for faith (verse 17).

1. The righteousness of God are His correct, right, and holy acts that perfectly show His attributes or character. In His Scriptures, He has revealed Himself in many wonderful ways including how He would rescue and redeem His creation (Genesis 3:15; Psalms 98:1-6; Isaiah 46:8-13; Isaiah 56:1, 62:1-12). The gospel shows how God perfectly fulfilled His righteousness and kept His covenants by fulfilling it in Himself through the person of His Son Jesus Christ.

2. This gospel is received by each person through faith, and from the beginnings of that faith the righteousness of God continues to be understood and grows in all of its aspects of salvation. The Apostle Paul discusses the beginnings of faith in justification (Romans 3:21-5:11) and then goes on to discuss many wonderful aspects of sanctification, glorification, Yahweh's revealed eternal plan, and true spiritual worship throughout the rest of the book.
3. To add to His point that this faith concept to enter into God's righteousness is Scriptural, he quotes from Habakkuk 2:4. This was also a key verse the reformer Martin Luther used to prove the need for all believers to be justified only on the basis of this Scriptural faith.

ALL PEOPLE NEED SALVATION PART I

ALL PEOPLE HAVE THE CHOICE TO BELIEVE GOD'S TRUTH OR SUPPRESS IT

ROMANS 1:18-32

- I. While the righteousness of God is being revealed in the gospel (verse 17), the wrath of God is being revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness toward every person who suppresses the truth (Romans 1:18-23).
 - A. The wrath of God is one of Yahweh God's characteristics or attributes which is part of His Being in the same way as His love, wisdom, goodness, mercy, truth (etc.) are part of His Being. However, God's wrath needs to be explained for people in a special way which doesn't allow them to bring their own sinful human tendencies into their understanding. All of God's attributes can be wrongly explained in human terms (anthropomorphized) but the wrath of God can be especially prone to misunderstanding (verse 18).
 1. The word wrath comes from the Greek word "orga" which can mean anger, indignation, or wrath. When this is applied to God, it is free from the sinful emotional reactions of most human anger or wrath. The wrath of God is always in perfect shalom or peace with the rest of His Being. In other words, Yahweh's wrath is in perfect agreement with His goodness, kindness, mercy, love, and justice.
 2. God's wrath is His perfectly weighed out and measured judgment of sin and evil as it relates to each individual's responsibility as well as His divine kingdom plans for this current world and the next. As God's holiness is violated in this world, He chooses the appropriate outcome of a combination of taking away some of His sin restraint now (the Scriptures refer to this as "God gave them up" in Romans 1:24, 26, 28) or storing up wrath for a future day (Romans 2:5; 2 Peter 3:8-10; Revelation 20:11-15).
 3. God's wrath is being revealed (unveiled) against people's ungodliness and unrighteousness.
 - a. Ungodliness comes from the Greek word "asebeian" which means without worship and reverence toward God.
 - b. Unrighteousness comes from the Greek word "adikia" which means injustice, and includes all wrong thoughts and acts against God as well as other human beings. It is by unrighteousness that people suppress or hold back known truth.
 - B. All people are responsible and without excuse before God because He has made a certain amount of truth about Himself known to everyone through His creation of them and the world they live in (verses 19, 20).

1. Created inside every person is a certain knowledge of God which has not been completely destroyed by sin. In theology (the study of God), we call this general revelation. Paul writes that it is "plain to them, because God has shown it to them" (verse 19; Psalms 19:1-6, 139:13-16; Ecclesiastes 3:11).
 - a. People should see all around them from creation God's eternity and God's power (verse 20; Psalms 90:2).
 - b. People should see all around them from creation God's Godness (in Greek "theotas") which represents many of His personal attributes (verse 20; Job 38:1-41:34).
2. Paul says that because of God's creation, people are without excuse (Greek "anapologatas" which is literally without apology or without a legal defense) (verse 20).

THOUGHT: How much understanding is God expecting from people around the world concerning Him? (Acts 17:24-28; Romans 1:19, 20) What should be the response of individuals as they look at God's creation without suppressing or holding back the truth? (Job 38:1-41:34; Psalms 8:1-9; Acts 17:27)

C. The Bible tells us that all people know they have been created by God but that when we as people refuse to honor (glorify, assign or ascribe His attributes to Him) or give thanks to Him, a progressive degradation in thinking and understanding happens inside people. We can even get so degraded as to start assigning God's attributes to animal and insect idols (verses 21-24).

THOUGHT: How are we doing in our nation and world at honoring and thanking God? What idols do we have in our world today?

- II. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven for all to see in this world by the idea that He gives a creation who once knew Him as Creator God up by letting them degrade themselves in their own truth suppression, immoral activity, and general unrighteousness (Romans 1:24-32).
 - A. Therefore (Greek "dio," as a result) God gave them up (repeated in verses 24, 26, and 28). The idea is that God is helping His creation by restraining much of sins natural impact on their minds and bodies. However, as people individually seek to suppress the truth, He increasingly removes His sin restraining power (possibly through angels, government, His saints, His truth, or Himself, Daniel 12:1; Romans 13:1-7; 2 Thessalonians 2:6, 7; Hebrews 2:14, 4:14-16; James 4:7).
 - B. As people became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts became darkened (verse 21), God gave them up in three ways (verses 24-32).

1. He gave them up to heart lusts (passions) to lead to general impurity and a dishonoring of peoples bodies (probably fornication and adultery of males and females in this context). This might also relate to the temple prostitutes of Paul's time with its fertility cults in every major city of the Roman Empire. Paul refuses to go there in his mind and rather blesses and glorifies His Creator God instead! (verses 24-26).
2. He gave them up to dishonorable homosexual passions. God does view homosexuality as contrary to nature and as moral perversion in the Old Testament and the New Testament (verses 26, 27; Leviticus 18:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10).
3. He gave them up to a debased (Greek "adokimon", the idea of failing the test, disqualified, useless, and rejected) mind. Because they refused to acknowledge God, Paul lists 21 nouns and adjectives that people fill themselves up with and also give approval to others practicing them.

ALL PEOPLE NEED SALVATION PART II

GOD'S ETERNAL LIFE AND WRATH ARE DISTRIBUTED IMPARTIALLY

ROMANS 2:1-16

- I. All people are without excuse before God's righteous judgment because we all practice unrighteousness. If we refuse to acknowledge and repent of our unrighteousness, then we store up wrath for ourselves for a future day of judgment called the day of wrath (Romans 2:1-5).
 - A. We as people need to be careful not to give into our natural tendency to look harshly at other people's unrighteousness and lightly at our own unrighteousness (verses 1-3).
 1. The idea of all people being without excuse (without apology or legal defense) from Romans 1:20 and the idea that all people practice unrighteousness from Romans 1:32 are reiterated in this passage (verse 1).
 2. Judging people in a harsh condemning way without examining ourselves and understanding that we have the same sinful tendencies inside us brings increased judgment upon us (verses 2, 3; Matthew 7:1-5).
 3. We as Christians are taught to exercise true godly judgment and spiritual discernment by keeping a close watch on ourselves (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:12-6:6; Galatians 6:1).
 - B. God's riches of kindness are being demonstrated to His creation by His forbearance (Greek "anocha" which is self-restraint, temporary truce, or delaying judgment action because of mercy) and His patience (Greek "makrothumias" which means long-suffering). It is God's kindness which gives sinful people time to repent (change their mind) about God and His plan of salvation (verse 4; 2 Peter 3:15, 16).
 - C. If we hold back or suppress the truth (Romans 1:18) about God and His plan of salvation, then the Scriptures inform us that we are becoming hard and impenitent (not willing to repent) in the core of our being (our heart). If we choose to do this, we store up wrath for ourselves at a future prophesied judgment day called "the day of wrath" (verse 5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15).

THOUGHT: Read Acts 17:22-31 and compare the Apostle Paul's reasoning with the people at Athens, Greece with his reasoning here in Romans.

- II. In the future, God's righteous judgment will be revealed and it will be based on each person's work as he or she has lived their life in their mortal body. God's judgment will be without partiality (Romans 2:6-11).
 - A. Several Scriptural ideas need to be properly understood in order to fully understand this passage.

1. Contextually this section of Scripture is between the Apostle Paul's presentation of the need for all people to believe the gospel about the righteousness of God (Romans 1:1-17) and a discourse in how everyone can enter into and grow in this great salvation provided in God's righteousness which begins with justification (being declared righteous by God) by faith (Romans 3:21-8:39).
 2. The Apostle Paul has made it plain and clear through all of his writings that salvation is only based on God's righteousness as revealed in His plan of providing Jesus Christ as the One who has paid for our sins. It is only receiving this message through faith that a person is justified in God's sight. He makes it clear that it is not based on our works (Romans 1:16, 17, 3:20-4:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Galatians 3:7-9).
 3. The Apostle Paul learned the gospel message from Jesus Christ Himself (Galatians 1:12) and Jesus taught us that the work of God is to believe in Jesus (John 6:28, 29, 12:44-50).
- B. Given the context of the passage as well as understanding the message from all of Scripture concerning the righteousness of God through faith, my conclusion is that the Apostle Paul in this passage is including maintaining faith in the creator God (Romans 1:18-32), faith in the gospel (Romans 1:16, 17, 3:21-5:11), and faith in how this message can affect people in their spiritual life (Romans 5:12-8:39) as he writes this. In other words, he writes Romans 2:6-11 with all of this in mind.
- C. There will be two judgments and outcomes for people depending on their differing works (verses 6-10).
1. Those who seek after the things of God (as creator God, the gospel, and salvation) by patience and well-doing will be given eternal life which he describes as a life of glory, honor, and peace.
 2. Those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth (Romans 1:18) about God, the gospel, and salvation and choose unrighteousness will be given a judgment of wrath which he describes as tribulation and distress.
- D. God will judge all people impartially based on the truth he has described for us (verse 11; Acts 10:34-43).
- III. Christ Jesus (the Messiah, Savior of the gospel) will be the judge of the secrets of every person in His creation. Everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, will be judged according to inner thoughts (Romans 2:16), righteous or unrighteous works (Romans 1:21-32), and the holding back or suppression of the truth (Romans 1:18-20). This judgment will not be based on their religious background or upbringing (Romans 2:12-16).
- A. All people have been given an internal law written for them because they have been created in the image of God. This law is sometimes referred to as natural law or the law of nature. This seems to be what Paul is referring to in Romans 1:18-20. This should give people the basics of God as creator, a knowledge of many of His attributes, and the ability to know right from wrong or true from false in many ways (verses 12-15a).

B. All people have been given a conscience (Greek "suneidasis" which means to know with, to apprehend something with oneself) and it seems to be an internal ability to discern the truth or error of something. The Bible tells us that our conscience can become damaged by refusing to listen to the truth (1 Timothy 4:2) that is before us (verse 15b).

C. Christ will judge all people based on the internal law and conscience (verse 16).

ALL PEOPLE NEED SALVATION PART III

THE JEWS SHOULD NOT RELY ON THEIR HISTORY OR THEIR LAW

ROMANS 2:17-3:20

- I. The Jews need to watch out for boastful pride which will keep them from understanding their own sin and their need for salvation through Christ (Romans 2:17-29).
 - A. In these verses, Paul definitely directly addresses the Jews (verses 17, 18).
 - B. They were confident of their standing before God and viewed themselves as guides, lights, instructors, and teachers to the Gentiles (verses 19, 20).
 1. The stumbling block to God's Law is humanity getting a hold of it and creating easier man-made laws that make it doable. Therefore, humans create their own system to be declared righteous in God's eyes (verses 21-23; Matthew 5:17-6:4).
 2. Because of this type of thinking, God is blasphemed (slandorous and abusive words usually about God) among the Gentiles because the Jews were disciplined for their unbelief and removed from their land by Gentile nations (verse 24; Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:22).
 3. Circumcision (peritoma - cut around) was meant by God to be an outward representation of an inward act of believing in God's promise and covenant (Genesis 17). Rather than being a symbol of God's work in the heart by the Holy Spirit bringing Yahweh praise, it had become for many, man's work for the flesh to boast about (verses 25-29; Philippians 3:1-3).

THOUGHT: Can it be harder for someone brought up in a works oriented religious environment to accept their own sinfulness and therefore repent and believe the Gospel?

- II. The Apostle Paul explains some of the advantages the Jews have been given and the problems many of them have concerning unbelief (Romans 3:1-8).
 - A. Circumcision was supposed to be valuable as a sign of the inner belief in Yahweh, the God of Abraham, by first the parents and then the child (verse 1b; Genesis 15:6, 17:9-14).
 - B. The Jews have been entrusted with the oracles of God. The word oracles in Greek is "logia" which means words of God, divine utterances, or revelations of Israel's God Yahweh which includes prophecy and pronouncements (verse 2).
 - C. The oracles of God include the entire 39 books of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible). According to Paul, included in these oracles are words dealing with adoption, glory, covenants, the giving of the Mosaic law, worship, the promises, and ultimately words about the Christ (Messiah) Himself (verse 2; Romans 9:4, 5).

- D. Some who know the Old Testament Scriptures still refuse to believe the message of each person's sinfulness and need for salvation through Yahweh and His Messiah. However, God will still be true to His Word and prove Himself justified in His judgments (verses 3, 4; Psalms 51:4; Psalms 89:30-37).
- E. Those that have reasoned that they can keep God's Law have a hard time not seeing God as unjust. Because they refuse to admit their own sinfulness, repent, and accept God's righteousness (found in Jesus Christ), they instead make up all sorts of hypothetical questions and statements to try and justify themselves (verses 5-8; Romans 2:13; Galatians 2:15-21).

THOUGHT: In what areas of life will a person struggle if they view God as unjust?

- III. Everybody is under sin whether Jew or Greek. The Jews are not better off with regards to personal salvation than anybody else (Romans 3:9-20).
 - A. Paul supports his claim by many texts in the Hebrew Scriptures claiming all humanities total unrighteousness and inability to gain true righteousness (justification) through their own efforts (verses 10-18; Psalms 14:1-3, 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Psalms 5:9; Psalms 140:3; Psalms 10:7; Isaiah 59:7, 8; Psalms 36:1).
 - B. The Law speaks to those under the Law (the Jews) (verse 19).
 - C. The purpose of the Law is to bring the knowledge of sin and lead us to faith in Yahweh's provision in Christ (verse 20; Galatians 3:19-26).

HOW PEOPLE ARE JUSTIFIED IN THE SIGHT OF GOD PART I

JUSTIFICATION IS THROUGH INDIVIDUAL FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

ROMANS 3:21-31

The Apostle Paul has already established in the book of Romans that salvation is found by believing the gospel message about God's righteousness in the person of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1-17). He has also proven his case that all people are under sin and are in need of God's prescribed means of salvation (Romans 1:18-3:20). In Romans 3:21 through 8:39, the Apostle Paul is now going to teach us the depth and fullness of the salvation which every believer can now enter into. He would agree with the writer of the book of Hebrews that we as believers have been called to "a great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3, 3:1).

The word salvation which is first used in the book of Romans in chapter 1 verse 16 comes from the Greek word "sozo" which means save, deliver, keep from harm, preserve, and rescue. In the Apostle Paul's mind, salvation has three main aspects which he will lay out as justification (the beginning phase of salvation where God declares believers righteous, Romans 3:21-5:11),

sanctification (the next phase of salvation where believers learn how to live in Christ and be set apart for the process of holiness, Romans 5:12-8:11), and glorification (the final phase of salvation where believers receive their glorified new bodies and reward for future kingdom purposes, Romans 8:12-39; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). These can be thought of for the believer in terms of past, present, and future tenses of salvation where in justification a believer has already been freed from the penalty of sin, in sanctification a believer is being set free from the power of sin on a moment by moment basis, and in glorification a believer will eventually be completely free of the presence of sin.

- I. Since the time of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, the ability of God to declare a sinner as righteous (as justified in His sight) is being made known (Romans 3:21-26).
 - A. This righteousness of God is apart from obedience to the Mosaic or Old Testament Law (verses 21-23).
 1. The term "righteousness of God" refers back to Romans 1:17 where it is revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ (verse 21).
 2. The Law and prophets have testified to this idea that all people are sinners and in desperate need for God's righteousness alone for their salvation (verse 21; Romans 3:10-18; Psalms 98:1-6; Isaiah 46:8-13; Isaiah 56:1, Isaiah 62:1-12).
 3. It comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe (verse 22).
 4. Everyone has sinned ("hamarton" - missed the mark) and come up short of God's eternal power, Godness, and image of God reflection (verse 23; Romans 2:20, 23; Genesis 1:26).
 - B. This righteousness of God justifies (declares righteous) believers through the work of Christ Jesus (verses 24-26).

1. This is given freely (like an unpaid for gift) by God's grace (unmerited favor) to believers (verse 24).
2. Christ's work redeemed "apolutroseos" or ransomed believers by the payment of a price (verse 24; Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14).
3. Christ's work propitiated "hilastarion" or satisfied the wrath of God concerning the believers unrighteousness and sins. This word is connected to the mercy seat or covering of the ark of the covenant in the most holy place (verse 24; Leviticus 16:14; Hebrews 9:5; 1 John 2:2).
 - a. Before the cross, God was righteous in His divine forbearance (self-restraint, temporary truce, delaying judgment action because of mercy), passing by past sins because of the person's belief in God's ability to forgive (verse 25; Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:15).
 - b. Since the time of Christ, God's pinnacle of full justice has been met and, therefore, now God has a way of declaring believers righteous and the world and unbelievers guilty (verse 26; Acts 17:31; John 5:21-29; 1 John 1:3-2:2).

THOUGHT: What would you say to someone who said that, "God will let me be with Him because I have done more good things than bad"?

- II. Christ's work eliminates the possibility of human self-righteous boasting (verses 27-31).
 - A. Since the only requirement that has been set by Yahweh God for the justification of an individual is that person's individual faith in the righteousness of God, as it has been revealed in the promised Messiah which we know as Jesus Christ, then all personal boasting is excluded (verse 27; Jeremiah 9:23, 24; 1 Corinthians 1:31; 2 Corinthians 10:17; Philippians 3:9).
 - B. The Jews needed to learn that it wasn't their works which would bring their individual justification. The Old Testament has never taught the idea of justification through works to be declared righteous in God's sight. However, wrongly taught Jews, many other religions and most of the philosophies of human understanding teach this idea to their own detriment and destruction. The Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures agree on the principle or law of justification by faith (verses 28-31; Genesis 15:6; Psalms 32:1, 2; Psalms 71:15, 16).

HOW PEOPLE ARE JUSTIFIED IN THE SIGHT OF GOD PART II

BOTH ABRAHAM AND DAVID PROVE THAT JUSTIFICATION IS THROUGH BELIEF IN YAHWEH AND HIS MESSIAH

ROMANS 4:1-25

In chapter 4, the Apostle Paul proves from Old Testament Scriptures his previous points. He uses the lives of Abraham and David to show that Yahweh's righteousness is accounted to, imputed to, or reckoned to believers through faith apart from works. From the beginning of the chapter to the end, he uses the Greek word "logizomai" (verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 24), which in English is translated as count, account, impute, or reckon. His conclusion is that anyone who desires to be justified (declared righteous) in God's sight must believe in God's righteousness, which has now been shown in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and God's ability to count that belief as the reason for their forgiveness of sins and justification.

- I. Abraham was justified or declared righteous before God because his faith was counted as righteousness apart from work (Romans 4:1-5).
 - A. Every part of the verse in Genesis 15:6 where "Abraham believed God (Yahweh) and it was counted to him as righteousness" is exegeted (the meaning of the text is drawn out).
 - B. Abraham didn't have anything to boast about "before God" because it was his faith or belief in God's (Yahweh's) promise to him (Genesis 15:4, 5) and not his own work which justified him or declared him righteous (verses 1-3; Romans 3:27, 28).
 - C. Abraham believed in the promise of God and received it and it was counted as a gift and as righteousness (verses 4, 5; Romans 3:24).
- II. David had faith in Yahweh's righteousness by forgiving his sins apart from his own works (Romans 4:6-8).
 - A. David's Psalm 32 speaks about the blessed person who trusts or has secure confidence in Yahweh God and, therefore, is counted as righteous in God's sight apart from works (verse 6; Psalm 32:10, 11).
 - B. The Apostle Paul quotes the beginning two verses of Psalm 32 which expresses David's understanding that his sins were forgiven and not counted against him due to his being part of the blessed whose trust was in Yahweh (verses 7, 8; 2 Samuel 12:13).

THOUGHT: Why do you think that God came up with a way to justify or declare people righteous based on belief in the righteousness of God which is then accounted to or imputed to each individual believer? Why do you think that God decided to not base justification as the start of salvation on works done by individual human beings?

- III. Abraham's faith and justification was before both circumcision and the Law making him the father of all who believe and the father of many nations (Romans 4:9-25).

- A. Abraham was declared righteous at least 14 years before he was circumcised (verses 9-12; Genesis 15:6; Genesis 17:10-13).
1. Circumcision was a sign and seal of Abraham's justification by faith (verses 9-11a).
 2. Abraham was uncircumcised at the time of his belief in Genesis 15:6 making him the father of all believers both past and present. God's righteousness is counted or imputed to every believer in Yahweh's ability to fulfill His promises of deliverance and salvation (verses 11b-12; Romans 1:16, 17).
- B. Abraham received the promise through faith and not through the Law. This promised Abraham and his offspring heirship of the world and Abraham to become the father of many nations (verses 13-25).
1. The promise of heirship of the world given to Abraham and his offspring rests on faith and not on law (verses 13-15).
 - a. Paul states that the Law (Mosaic Law) came 430 years after the promise given to Abraham (Galatians 3:17) and through the Law comes the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20).
 - b. According to the promise, Abraham and his offspring would be heirs of the world (Genesis 15:4, 5). However, we know that Scripturally Abraham's heir that would be appointed heir of all things is Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16; Hebrews 1:2) and that all believers in Him would have the right to become co-heirs with Him (Romans 8:12-17; Galatians 3:29).
 2. Abraham became the father of many nations because of the faith which he had in the promise of Yahweh. This made the promised blessing of salvation which begins with justification rest on grace (unmerited favor) rather than works (verses 16-25).
 - a. Abraham was promised "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3) and that Yahweh made him "the father of many nations" (Genesis 17:5) and Abraham believed that Yahweh would fulfill these promises through his offspring (verses 16-22).
 - i. Abraham still believed God's promise that a son (an heir) would be born even though he was close to 100 years old and Sarah was around 90 years old (verses 16-19; Genesis 21:1-7).
 - ii. By remembering Yahweh's ability as the Creator God who is able to give life to the dead and bring about all His designs and purposes by His power, Abraham was convinced that God was able to do what He promised (verses 20-22).
 - b. All believers can now be declared righteous and have the imputed righteousness of God by believing in Yahweh Father's righteousness as revealed in the Scriptures (verses 23-25).

- i. Jesus our Lord was raised from the dead to show that the righteousness of God promised in the Scriptures was perfectly fulfilled (verses 23, 24).
- ii. All who have faith in Jesus' death can have forgiveness of their trespasses (transgressions, rebellions, offenses) (verse 25a; Isaiah 53:5, 8, 12).
- iii. All who have faith that Jesus perfectly fulfilled the righteousness of God and was, therefore, raised from the dead will be declared righteous (justified) by God and receive the accounting and imputation of His righteousness (verse 25b; Isaiah 53:11).

WHAT JUSTIFIED BELIEVERS HAVE RECEIVED IN THEIR LORD JESUS CHRIST AND NOW CAN LEARN TO WALK IN

ROMANS 5:1-11

- I. Those who have been justified (declared righteous) by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ now have these amazing benefits (Romans 5:1-5).
 - A. Present and lasting peace with God. Peace is the Greek word "eirena" and comes from the Hebrew word "Shalom" which means to be complete, sound, safe, free from fault, healthy and prosperous (verse 1; Isaiah 52:7, 53:5; Acts 10:36; Ephesians 2:14; Colossians 1:20).
 - B. Access into the grace (unmerited favor) of God. The Greek word for access is the word for introducing someone into the presence of a ruler (verse 2; Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 4:16; 2 Peter 1:3).
 - C. The ability to rejoice (boast in God; Galatians 6:14) in afflictions, tribulations, or sufferings. The justified believer's peace is with God but not necessarily the things or people in this world (James 1:2-5).
 1. Sufferings produce steadfast endurance (hupomonan-remain under) to bear up under the pressure of the difficulty (verse 3; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Galatians 3:10).
 2. Steadfast endurance produces proof or approved character like gold from the furnace which has been purified and tested (verse 4; Job 23:10; James 1:12).
 3. Approved character produces hopeful expectation in God and His promises (verse 4; 1 Timothy 3:13; James 1:4).
 4. Hopeful expectation produces confidence before God (instead of shame) and a deep understanding that His Holy Spirit lives in us helping and loving us (verse 5; Romans 8:31-37; 1 John 4:7-21).

THOUGHT: What benefit of being justified has meant the most to you this week?

- II. Justified believers should be amazed at the full extent of God's love as they consider the death and resurrection life of Christ (Romans 5:6-11).
 - A. Christ Jesus came to die and shed His blood for us, as well as the whole world, while we were still sinners (verses 6-8; John 3:16; 1 John 2:1, 2).
 1. When Christ was sent to die at just the right time in this world, the human condition was described by the Apostle Paul by two Greek words "asthenon" (which means weak, diseased, and feeble) and "asebon" (people lacking worship and reverence and ungodly) (verse 6; Galatians 4:4, 5).

2. Rarely will a person die for a righteous person (one who upholds right) although for a good person (someone who does good to others), a person might die. However, God's amazing love is shown in Christ's death for sinners, which includes the whole human race, since everyone has fallen short of God's glory and standard of righteousness (verses 7, 8; Isaiah 53:11, 12; Romans 3:9, 23).
- B. The resurrection life of Christ guarantees justified believers eternal reconciliation with God as they participate in and grow in present (sanctification) and future (glorification) aspects of their great salvation (verses 9-11).
1. As justified believers, we are no longer under God's wrath and referred to as His enemies (Greek "echthroi" which means hostile ones, enemies, and haters). We are now referred to as those that have been reconciled to God. The Greek word reconciliation is "katallasso" and has the meaning to exchange or in this context it would consist of believers exchanged from the status of enemies that are hostile to God to being those that have received His righteousness in Christ and are therefore now part of His eternal family (verses 9, 10; Romans 8:8-17; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Ephesians 2:4-7).
 2. The three persons of Yahweh God's trinity have been seen working in every purpose of accomplishing a believers first phase of salvation which we know of as justification. God the Father planned and sent His Son so that believers might have peace with Him through reconciliation and then sent His Holy Spirit to indwell them eternally (Romans 5:1, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11). God the Son accomplished that Father's will through His death and resurrection life (Romans 5:1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11). God the Holy Spirit was sent to pour the Father's love into our hearts as a guarantee of our salvation in this life and the next (Romans 5:5). Through this wonderful plan, we as believers now rejoice and boast in this amazing Triune God Yahweh and our once and for all eternal justification and reconciliation! (verse 11)

THOUGHT: Take time out this coming week to rejoice in Yahweh and His work of righteousness in your life. Specifically, pray through the Scriptural words and concepts of gospel, justification, reconciliation, peace with God, access by faith into this grace and rejoicing in hope.

BELIEVERS CAN REIGN WITH JESUS NOW AND CO-REIGN WITH HIM THROUGHOUT ETERNITY

BECAUSE OF HIS GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HIS RESURRECTION LIFE

ROMANS 5:12-21

The importance of these verses of Scripture for the Christian Church concerning the Biblical concepts of original and inherited sin are unmatched. However, at first glance, when a Bible student starts to understand how the book of Romans is laid out with Paul moving from discussing the first phase of salvation (justification from Romans 3:21-5:11) to the second phase of salvation (sanctification from Romans 5:12-8:11), it might cause that person to wonder why Paul might choose to deal with the topics of Adam and original sin at this point. Why didn't he choose to deal with this topic back in Romans 1:18-3:20 when he thoroughly discussed that all people are sinners without hope apart from Christ? I believe he had a legitimate and perfect reason to wait and discuss this topic at this point because it is the doctrinal and practical springboard for sanctification. It proves to us that the second Adam (Christ) and His obedience brings to believers not only justification through the gift of His righteousness (from His death) but actual life from His resurrection life leading to full life in eternity. Therefore, these verses are the perfect start to our understanding of sanctification which is how a believer grows in Christ's life of holiness.

- I. One man who was the Biblical and historical person Adam brought sin to the whole human race. One man who was the Biblical and historical person Jesus Christ brought justification and life to every person who will receive His gift (Romans 5:12-18).
 - A. The best way to understand the flow of Romans 5:12-18 is to realize that Paul opens his argument in verse 12, has some parenthetical thoughts in verses 13 through 17 and then closes his thoughts from verse 12 in verse 18. Combining verses 12 and 18 would sound like this, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. As one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men."
 - B. The Bible tells us that the first human people of Yahweh's creation named Adam and Eve sinned (missed the mark of God's righteousness) against God by breaking His clearly stated commandment in the garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15-17). Even though Eve sinned first through the deception of the serpent, Adam, who was created before Eve and sinned willingly without the serpent's deception, became the transmitter of sin to the human race (Genesis 3:1-19; 1 Corinthians 15:22; 1 Timothy 2:13-15). Sin brought immediate spiritual death (separation from God) and eventual physical death (separation of the soul from the material or physical human body) to humanity. Death then spread inherently to all humans through Adam's original sin also revealing that all humans have sinned (verse 12; Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 3:23; 1 Corinthians 15:22).
 1. The sinning of Adam and Eve is the beginning of original sin and the fall of humanity which is commonly referred to as "the fall." As a result of the fall, humans have become separated and alienated from God, from each other, and are subject to disease and physical death. Therefore, all humans since Adam have a fallen, corrupted nature and are under guilt and condemnation (Romans 1:18-23, Romans 1:32; Romans 3:9, 23).

2. Although there are many views as to original sin and how it is inherited from Adam, the two main views are referred to as Federal headship and Traducianism.
 - a. Federal headship holds to the idea that Adam was in covenant with Yahweh as the representative of the human race. When he fell, all humans fell with him. Many in this view believe we receive our physical characteristics through natural inheritance but believe that the inside makeup of the soul and/or spirit is specially created by God for each individual.
 - b. Traducianism, also called Natural headship, believes that each person receives both the body and the soul (spirit) from their parents. God originally created Adam and Eve's soul (spirit) (Genesis 2:7) but committed the work of parenting as well as the built in transmission of body and soul (spirit) to His creation (Genesis 2:1-3; 3:16; 4:1, 2; 5:3). This view seems to be supported the best by Scripture in my opinion.
- C. The Apostle Paul now writes about the parenthetical ideas he wants the church to know about including sin, death, life, and the transmission process (verses 13-17).
1. Sin and death have been the plight of humanity since the fall of Adam. The Mosaic Law didn't bring sin and death but it should have revealed to all humanity more of the knowledge of sin and their need for the righteousness of God (Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:15-26). After Adam broke the first command given to him, it is obvious that sin and death have reigned. A second Adam (Jesus Christ) will come to free believers from the sin of the first Adam (verses 13, 14; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45).
 2. Adam brought to the human family death and condemnation. God's grace (unmerited favor) and free gift of righteousness in Jesus Christ brought to His believers (receivers) in the human family the ability to overcome death through justification (declared righteous through God's righteousness) and reign in life now and forever (verses 15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49).
- D. The summary statement: Jesus Christ's one act of righteousness (His Scriptural death, burial, and resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4) will erase and reverse the power of Adam's sin which led to the condemnation of all people and in its place bring justification and life to all people who will receive His free gift of righteousness (verse 18, in the context of verse 17).
- II. The Apostle Paul's final thoughts which will lead into his teaching on sanctification and glorification in Romans chapters 6 through 8 (Romans 5:19-21).
- A. By one man's (Adam's) disobedience, many were made sinners so by one man's (Jesus Christ's) obedience, many will be made righteous. By refusing the righteousness of God as found ultimately in Jesus Christ, many will die in their sins. By receiving the Scriptural gospel of Jesus Christ, many will live righteous lives before God forever (verse 19; Revelation 20:11-21:8; 22:14, 15).
 - B. The law (Mosaic or otherwise) came to increase the knowledge of sin so that God's grace (unmerited favor), which is the righteousness of God which needs to be believed and received as a gift, can abound (verse 20; Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:21-26).

C. The plan of Yahweh God is that His righteousness as found in Jesus Christ lead us to the true eternal life which is the complete opposite of the things of death the Apostle Paul discussed in this section. The process of eternal life begins with belief in the Scriptural gospel of Jesus Christ and starts with justification and leads us into sanctification and glorification to the praise of Yahweh's glory! (verse 21)

BELIEVERS CAN WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE AND GROW IN HOLINESS OR SANCTIFICATION

BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN UNITED WITH CHRIST

ROMANS 6:1-14

While living out faith in our mortal bodies, we as justified believers are waiting for our future life with Christ in His Millennial and Eternal Kingdom, our new resurrected bodies, freedom from sins presence, and the judgment seat (Bema) of Christ where we will find out our rewards (or lack of rewards) and our future work assignments (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 15:50-58; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; Revelation 20:1-22:5). However, even though our futures are glorious, we presently have work to accomplish in Christ. Armed with the knowledge that Christ's work in us has not only justified us and reconciled us to God, we have also found that through the abundance of the grace that has been provided, we can now reign in this life even while we are still in our mortal bodies (Romans 5:1, 11, 17, 21). With the assurance that our future position with Christ is secure, the Apostle Paul wants to now encourage us how to experience the power of Christ in our daily lives. Instead of trying to live our lives out in the same way which we inherited from Adam (referred to as "the man of dust" in 1 Corinthians 15:49), we are now taught to live our lives united with Jesus Christ (referred to as "the man from heaven" in 1 Corinthians 15:48, 49) and His inheritance.

- I. As justified believers, we died to sin, which started in Adam and which characterizes all of the human family, because Jesus Christ's death became our death in actuality (positionally) and in ever increasing real ways presently (experientially). We are now united with Christ in His death (Romans 6:1-7; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45-49; Galatians 3:20; Colossians 1:13, 14). As such we should:
 - A. Reject the idea proposed by some that God receives more glory through increased sin because more of His grace can, therefore, be revealed. In other words, this view twists and pollutes the Apostle Paul's view of the law and sin (verse 1; Romans 3:20, 5:20; Galatians 3:23, 24). People that adopt this twisted view as their own usually go wrong in two different directions which are Libertinism and Legalism.
 1. Libertinism: libertines are people acting without any moral restraints. These are many times associated with those who live lives as "antinomians" which is the Greek word meaning "without law." Followers of Christ are now said to be those following Christ's commandments of love (Matthew 11:28-30; John 14:21, 15:12-17; 1 Corinthians 9:21).
 2. Legalism: legalists seek morality through strict adherence and observance of laws and moral codes. Religious legalists believe that divine favor and righteousness can be gained through strict law keeping practices apart from God's righteousness in Christ. The law and the Mosaic Law was never intended for this purpose (Romans 7:13, 14; Galatians 3:19-26).
 - B. Realize that we have died with Christ and, therefore, are free to not live in sin (verses 2-5; Colossians 3:3, 4).

1. We now have the ability to sin less often. The outward act of water baptism is a symbol of the inward reality of justification through faith in Jesus Christ and the resulting immediate Holy Spirit baptism which happened inside each believer. Through the process of Jesus baptizing each believer in His Holy Spirit (John 1:33; Acts 1:5, 8; Acts 2:2, 38; Ephesians 1:13, 14) and the Holy Spirit then in turn immediately baptizing each believer into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), we are eternally united with Christ (verses 2, 3).
 2. We now have the ability to please God and live righteously (Ephesians 5:8-10). Paul calls this walking in newness of life (verses 4, 5). The theological term for this is sanctification (from the Greek word "hagios" which means set apart to God for holiness and is used in Romans 6:19, 22).
- C. Realize that our old self (before justification) was crucified so that the body of sin (our sinful tendencies, not our physical bodies, Romans 7; Galatians 5:17; Colossians 2:11, 20-23) might be brought to nothing (might be rendered inoperative and inactive) experientially in our present moment by moment salvation (verses 6, 7; Ephesians 4:22, 25-31; Colossians 3:5-9).

THOUGHT: How does dying with Christ free you from living in sin?

- II. As justified believers, we are now united with Christ in His resurrected life (Romans 6:8-14). As such we should:
 - A. Realize that we have been raised with Christ and, therefore, live with Him now and in the future (verse 8; Colossians 3:1, 2).
 - B. Realize that Christ (as our redeemer and example) died to sin once, now lives to please God, and at the core of our being this is also true with us (verses 9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; 1 Peter 3:18).
 - C. Not let sin reign (Greek basilueto - "to be king," a present, imperative) in our mortal (Greek thnatos - "subject to death") bodies (verse 12).
 - D. Not present or offer (place at ones disposal, a present, imperative) the parts of our bodies as instruments or weapons (Greek "hopla") of unrighteousness for the purpose of sinning. Rather we are to present our body parts to God as instruments or weapons of righteousness (verses 13, 14).

THOUGHT: Which body part do you need to place at God's disposal today?

BELIEVERS HAVE BEEN RELEASED FROM THE MOSAIC LAW TO LEARN THE NEW WAY OF THE SPIRIT

ROMANS 6:15-7:6

- I. As justified believers who are united to Christ, we have a moment by moment choice of whether to serve sin or righteousness (Romans 6:15-23; Galatians 5:13-26).
 - A. Romans 6:1 and Romans 6:15 are very similar verses except for verse one twists and pollutes Paul's doctrine of grace without mentioning the Mosaic Law and verse 15 does the same thing mentioning the Mosaic Law. Paul argues that when we receive the message of the righteousness of God through the free gift of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:16, 17) that we have died to the sin of our old life inherited in Adam and are now set free to live a new life in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:2-14). The idea of people living in sin or relishing sin for any reason makes the apostle cry out in both verse 1 and verse 15 with the phrase "by no means!" or "may it never be!" (verse 15).
 - B. The principle is this: we become servants to whatever we choose to obey (verse 16). Obedience to sin takes us away from God's desired pathway for us (encompassed in the word death) (verse 16; 1 Corinthians 11:27-32) and obedience to God moves us closer into His fellowship and righteousness (verse 16; 1 John 1:3-7).
 - C. By being heart-obedient to this form of teaching which has been handed over to us (Greek "paradidomai" – as to a new slave master), we can make true progress in righteousness (verses 17, 18).
 - D. Like we used to offer our body parts for impurity (immoral sexual activity) and wickedness (lawlessness), we now are to offer our body parts to righteousness and sanctification (verses 19, 20; Ephesians 4:23, 24; Colossians 3:10-17).
 - E. The wages for choosing to be a servant of sin is shame and death for the believer (separated fellowship, discipline, etc). Choosing to live as a servant of righteousness through the gift of God in Christ brings full salvation (fellowship, blessing, reward, etc.) and eventually fullness of true life forever referred to as eternal life (including a new glorified body) (verses 21-23; Matthew 19:29; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).
 1. Justified believers now have the privilege of bearing fruit to God as we abide in Christ and learn to walk in the Holy Spirit (verses 21, 22; John 15:7-11; Galatians 15:22, 23).
 2. The word wages (Greek "opsonia") was a Roman soldier's food allowance. The wage or payment of serving sin brings about separation and death related consequences. Living in the free gift of God (Christ) brings life consequences and guaranteed eternal life (verse 23).

THOUGHT: Memorize Romans 6:22, 23 this week because this will keep you on a pathway of serving righteousness rather than sin.

- II. Justified believers need to learn to serve God now in a new way rather than turning back to a previously tried old way (Romans 7:1-6).

A. All believers have now died to the law through the body of Christ (verses 1-4b).

1. We have died to the law by uniting ourselves with Christ. We now have died with Him, have fulfilled the law in Him, and therefore the old law should no longer have a binding or condemning force on our new lives (verses 1-3, 4b; Galatians 3:23, 24; Colossians 3:1-4).
2. Christ fulfilled the law by living a perfect life and submitting Himself to a cruel death in His body (verse 4a; Matthew 5:17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

B. All believers now belong to Christ, and our purpose now is to bear fruit unto God (verses 4c-6; John 15:5, 8, 15, 16; Philippians 1:21, 22).

1. Living life "in the flesh" whether as an unbeliever or a believer, produces a mixture of sin aroused by the law. This combination produces fruit unto death (lacking God's fellowship, will, purpose, or blessing) (verse 5; Romans 6:19-23, 7:14-20, 8:12-14).
2. Believers have now been released from (Greek "katargeo" - to make unemployed, redundant) the law but we need to learn how to serve God now in the new way of the Spirit (verse 6; Romans 8:2; Galatians 3:23-25; Colossians 2:16-23).

THOUGHT: What choices do we make on a moment by moment basis that determines whether we as believers produce fruit unto God or fruit unto death?

BELIEVERS STILL STRUGGLE WITH SIN AND THE LAW BECAUSE OF THEIR FLESH

ROMANS 7:7-25

Through the centuries, Christians have debated whether in Romans 7:7-25 the Apostle Paul is talking about an unbeliever who is wrestling inside himself or herself before becoming a believer (justification) or whether it is a believer wrestling inside himself or herself over internal sin issues (sanctification). It seems plain to me that the evidence points to the second option of a believer wrestling with his or her own sanctification for four main reasons: 1) The context of the book of Romans established justification in this doctrinal section of Romans chapters 1-8 as complete and finished in Romans 5:11. From Romans 5:12 on it discusses sanctification and glorification and, therefore, Romans 7:7-25 is solidly in the sanctification section for the believer; 2) It has already been established that all unbelievers are ungodly, unrighteous, and suppress the truth about God (Romans 1:18, 3:9-18), it is only the justified person who has the capacity of holiness, wrestling, and inner desire for God's true righteousness that is seen in Romans 7:15-25; 3) Other Scriptures support the inner wrestling of the believer in sanctification such as Galatians 5:16-26, Ephesians 4:20-32, and 1 Peter 2:11; and finally, 4) The final verse of this section in Romans 7:25 proclaims that Jesus Christ our Lord is the one who can bring victory to a believer and yet it goes on to bring out the continual struggle which will happen inside the believer while still in their mortality.

- I. Justified believers have died to sin (Romans 6:2) and have died to the Law (Romans 7:4) and yet they still struggle with sin and the Law. However, the Law of God itself is holy, righteous, and good (Romans 7:7-13).
 - A. The Law reveals what sin is according to God's perfection (Romans 3:20). Therefore, it is holy. The idea of holy (Greek "hagios") is set apart to God to reveal His perfection. The Apostle Paul brings the tenth commandment "You shall not covet" (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21) into the view of believers as an example of how much all of us fall short or miss the mark (the definition of sin) of God's perfection (verse 7).
 - B. The Law of God increases sins desire to sin more (like a catalyst). Therefore, it is just and righteous in condemning human sins before a perfectly holy and righteous God (verses 8-12; Romans 1:32, 5:20).
 1. It is human sin and our sinful responses to God's righteous prohibitions against sin which ends up deceiving us and adding to our problems with holiness and sanctification (verse 8; James 1:12-15).
 2. As an example, the Apostle Paul points us to his own life as a Pharisee. At one phase of his life before justification, he thought he was living out the Law blamelessly (Philippians 3:4-6) because he had reduced the Law to a man-made, doable system like many of the other Jewish Pharisees. However, once the Law was allowed to really shine on his life with an understanding of Yahweh's full holiness and perfection, he realized in justification, and now realizes in sanctification, that it is only the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus that brings life (Philippians 3:7-11). The system of depending on your own righteousness brings death, but the system of depending on the righteousness of God brings life (verses 9-12).

C. Paul's spiritual formulation would be sin + law = death (a negative spiritual reaction that is supposed to lead someone to cry out to God for mercy and belief in justification and then continued mercy, belief, and confession in sanctification). Therefore, the Law is good because it ultimately is designed to bring about belief and confession in the righteousness of God in Christ (verse 13; Romans 10:8-13; Galatians 3:23-25; 1 John 1:5-10).

THOUGHT: As a believer, how will understanding the Apostle Paul's thoughts of sin and the Law help you to avoid setbacks in your spiritual walk?

II. The Law of God is spiritual (Greek "pneumatikos"), but Paul and all believers are fleshly (Greek "sarknos") when we offer ourselves to sin rather than to God (Romans 7:14-25; Romans 6:15-18).

A. A believer now has a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17) which desires the things of God (Ephesians 4:23, 24, 5:8-10) as well as a remnant of the old self called the flesh (verses 14-24; Romans 8:1-4; Galatians 5:16-18).

1. The flesh is our leftover sinful tendencies and is sometimes called ethical flesh (better named unethical) by theologians. It is different from our physical or mortal bodies (Romans 6:12, 13, 8:11).
2. The flesh seeks to reign (verses 15-20), practice evil (verses 19, 21), and wage war against the new nature in order to take it captive (verse 23).

B. In Paul's theology, a believer's new nature desires to do what is good (verses 15, 18, 21), delights in God's Law (verse 22), and operates to its full extent in a Spirit controlled mind (verses 23, 25). However, the struggle of setting our mind on the flesh or the Spirit will be with us throughout our lives in these mortal bodies (verse 25; Romans 8:5-8; Galatians 5:16-26; 1 Peter 2:11).

THOUGHT: Flesh (sin) + Law = death; New nature + Spirit = life; the choice is yours. Is the thing which concerns you most leading you toward death or life? Look up Romans 13:14 for your encouragement in the battle.

BELIEVERS NOW LIVE UNDER THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

ROMANS 8:1-11

The Apostle Paul established once and for all that a believer is justified (declared righteous and freed from the penalty of sin) before God by receiving the righteousness of God which was provided through Jesus Christ through a final series of verses found in Romans 5:1-11. From that time on in the book of Romans, the one-time act of justification before God for the believer should be settled. Peace with God, access to His grace, eternal reconciliation with God, and the glories of being with Him forever awaits. After establishing justification (the first phase of our salvation), the Apostle Paul next turns his attention to sanctification (the second phase of our salvation) which is the life of holiness or the life in the Holy Spirit all believers are called to while still in our mortal bodies. He has systematically established the foundational doctrines of sanctification by teaching us about our new nature given to us through Christ (Romans 5:12-23), our new position and real abilities through our union with Christ to live this new life (Romans 6:1-14), our ability to now obey and bear fruit to God through the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:15-7:6), and the internal struggle we will have due to the leftover sinful tendencies and habits from our old life which is called our flesh (Romans 7:7-25). Finally, in these verses we will now study in Romans 8:1-11, the Apostle Paul wants to wrap up and put the final trimmings on the doctrine of sanctification before allowing us to move forward to the final phase of salvation which is called glorification.

- I. Believers in Christ Jesus should now live out their lives in a new way which is free from condemnation (Romans 8:1-4).
 - A. The Mosaic Law brings condemnation (a judgment against someone) to the flesh. The flesh is the core nature of unbelievers and the "sinful tendency" remnant in believer's lives. Remember Paul's equation of flesh (sin) + Law = death which he formulated in chapters one through seven (verse 1).
 1. Believers now have died to sin (Romans 6:2) and have died to the Mosaic Law (Romans 7:4) through Christ (verse 2; Galatians 3:19, 23-25; Colossians 2:13-23)
 2. Believers now have the law of the Spirit of life. Therefore, Paul's new formula is new nature + Spirit = life (verse 2; Romans 6:22, 23, 7:6).
 - a. Jesus described the Holy Spirit as the one who "gives life" (John 6:63) and the believer who has the Holy Spirit as the one who has living water flowing out of his/her heart (John 7:38, 39).
 - b. Life in the Holy Spirit is described as New Covenant ministry and a progressively transformed life (2 Corinthians 3:6-18), the one who leads us to do good and reap eternal life (Galatians 6:7-10), and the one who guides our inner renewal and inheritance (Titus 3:5-7).
 - B. God has fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law in us through our justification (past-tense salvation) in Christ (verse 3; Romans 3:19-24; Matthew 5:17).
 1. Jesus did not have a depraved and corrupted human nature (flesh) due to the virgin birth (Isaiah 53:4-12; Matthew 1:18-21).
 2. Even though 100% human (as well as 100% divine), He is said to be in the "likeness" of sinful flesh since He actually never sinned (Hebrews 4:15).

C. God desires for His believers to now learn to walk according to the Spirit so that we might fulfill His will (righteous requirement) for us (verse 4). In Paul's mind, this would be present tense salvation, sanctification, or walking in holiness (Romans 6:19, 22; Romans 7:22, 25).

THOUGHT: What are some ways believers can slow down their sanctification?

- II. Believers in Christ Jesus now have the choice of obeying the Holy Spirit or the flesh (Romans 8:5-9).
 - A. The flesh will produce death (which for the believer is broken fellowship with God and fellow believers, loss of good fruit, and loss of reward and inheritance) and the Spirit will produce life and peace (verses 5, 6; Romans 6:21-23; 7:4-6; Galatians 5:16-26).
 - 1. To set our minds on the flesh is to be controlled in our intellect, emotions, and will by our leftover sinful tendencies and habits (Colossians 3:1-11).
 - 2. To set our minds on the Spirit is to be controlled in our intellect, emotions, and will by the things of God, each of the Persons in the Godhead Trinity and the Word of God (Colossians 3:1-4, 12-17).
 - B. Living or walking in the Spirit pleases God now whereas living in the flesh doesn't (verses 7, 8; Ephesians 5:8-10).
 - C. All believers have the Holy Spirit living in them now (verse 9; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:13).
- III. Believers in Christ Jesus now continue to have dying physical bodies and yet the core of their being is alive through the new nature and the Holy Spirit. Also, because of the Holy Spirit's presence, we are assured of having a resurrected spiritual body in the future (Romans 8:10, 11; 1 Corinthians 15:35-49; 2 Corinthians 5:1-6; Ephesians 1:13, 14).

THOUGHT: If all believers have the Holy Spirit, why do some believers still pray for the Holy Spirit?

BELIEVERS CAN LIVE LIFE IN FELLOWSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT NOW IN CERTAINTY OF THEIR ADOPTION, HEIRSHIP, AND NEW BODIES

ROMANS 8:12-28

- I. What the Holy Spirit now does and will do in believers lives (Romans 8:12-27).
 - A. The Holy Spirit now helps believers "put to death" our flesh (sinful tendencies and habits) and therefore truly live (verses 12-17; Colossians 3:5-9).
 1. This is a process. As we are led by the Spirit of God, we are living out our children of God position (verses 12-14; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 2:28-3:3).
 - a. In light of all we have learned in Romans 1:1-8:11 about the righteousness of God in the gospel, our sinfulness, our justification through faith in Jesus Christ, and the life that has been given us through our new nature and the Holy Spirit, we are not indebted (obligated) to our flesh but rather to the things of the Holy Spirit (verse 12).
 - b. If we choose to live according to our flesh, it will lead to the things of death (for the believer broken fellowship with God and fellow believers, loss of good fruit, and loss of reward and inheritance). If we choose to live according to the things of the Holy Spirit, we will have true life (such as fellowship with God and other believers, good fruit from the Holy Spirit, reward, and inheritance) (verses 13, 14; 1 Corinthians 3:11-16; Galatians 5:16-24).
 2. This process should not lead us back to the old ways of fear and the Law but rather to a deeper understanding of being God's adopted children (verse 15a; Galatians 4:5-7).
 3. This process should deepen our relationship with God as our Abba (an Aramaic expression used in the family circle for father) (verses 15b, 16; Mark 14:36; Galatians 4:6).
 4. This process involves suffering with Christ but it will also produce future inheritance when we are glorified with Christ. The word glorified comes from the Greek word "doxa" which is defined as the brightness, splendor, or radiance of God and the things of Christ's kingdom (verse 17; Matthew 19:28-30; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; Hebrews 11:1-40; James 2:23; Revelation 20:4).
 - B. The Holy Spirit will give to believers resurrected spiritual bodies as well as a restored and new heaven and earth (verses 18-25).
 1. The creation was subjected to frustration ("mataiotas" - vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:1), aimlessness, inability to reach or obtain results) by God at the time of the fall (Genesis 3:14, 17-19). It is portrayed as looking forward to its restoration at Christ's Millennial reign on this earth with His believers and its ultimate perfect restoration at the new heaven and new earth with His believers (verses 18-22; Isaiah 9:1-7, 11:1-10; chapter 60; Ephesians 1:10; Revelation 20:1-6, 21:1-22:6).

2. We also continue to groan because we still have our remnant flesh and physical bodies that are ill-adapted for eternal life (verses 23-25; John 14:1-4).
- C. The Holy Spirit helps believers in our weakness by praying for us (verses 26, 27).
1. We pray in imprecise, spoken ways to Abba, Father (1 John 5:14, 15).
 2. He prays in precise, unspoken ways according to God's will (John 14:15-27).

THOUGHT: Meditate on the full benefits and blessings which we as believers have received by having the Holy Spirit indwelling us permanently and eternally since our justification by faith. Does this make us understand 2 Peter 1:3-11 in a deeper and richer way as it is applied to our sanctification?

- II. A believer's present life of sanctification (growing in holiness, being set apart to God) is a cooperative effort between our new nature and the Holy Spirit (verse 28).
- A. We learned in verses 22 through 26 that we presently live in "weakness" because of the struggle with our remnant flesh and our physical limitations.
 - B. We learned in verse 27 that the Holy Spirit prays for us in precise, unspoken ways according to God's will which strengthens us.
 - C. The "all things" are the sufferings of this present world which all believers now go through (verse 28; Romans 5:3-5, 8:17, 18, 23).
 - D. The "ones loving" (agapoin – present, active, participle) God are obedient believers who are serving God in the Holy Spirit rather than following their flesh (verse 28; Romans 6:6-13, 16, 17, 20-23; 7:4-6, 25; 8:1-5, 13, 14; John 15:8-17).
 1. These "God-loving ones" have been called (invited) according to the purpose (plan, design, will) of God (verse 28; Romans 1:6, 7).
 2. These "God-loving ones" present weaknesses and sufferings work together under the Holy Spirit's leading (Romans 8:13, 14) for good (something upright and intrinsically valuable such as fruit unto holiness and God (Romans 6:22; 7:4; John 15:8; Ephesians 2:10), and fulfilling God's plan of conforming His created ones into Christ's image) (verse 29; Ephesians 4:23, 24).

THOUGHT: How have you seen the Holy Spirit weave your sufferings for good?

BELIEVERS ARE NOW ETERNALLY SECURE IN GOD'S LOVE

ROMANS 8:29-39

- I. A believer's justification before God is finished, a believer's present sanctification is being worked out on a moment by moment basis as we set our minds on the Holy Spirit, and a believer's ultimate conformity with Christ (glorification) is eternally secure (Romans 8:29, 30).
 - A. In God's plan and purpose, we have already been foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified (verses 29, 30).
 1. Foreknew (proegno) simply means "to know beforehand" (verse 29; 1 Peter 1:2).
 2. Predestined (proorisen) means to mark out a boundary beforehand or to foreordain (verses 29, 30) in this case to adoption and ultimate conformity to Christ (also Ephesians 1:4, 5).
 3. Called (invited), justified (declared righteous, past-salvation) and glorified (future-salvation associated with our new bodies and ultimate conformity to Christ) add to the certainty of our salvation (verse 30).
 4. The Apostle Paul is concentrating on glorification which is our final goal of our salvation in Romans 8:12-39 as well as our eternal security. Since we are currently in the sanctification phase of our salvation as believers, while in our mortal bodies (which he thoroughly discussed in Romans 5:12-8:11), he chooses to leave this out of the discussion here considering its current ongoing basis.
 - B. There are three main ways to try to make the Biblical doctrines of foreknowledge and predestination fit together with human responsibility and free will in regards to salvation.
 1. Calvinism: God has a free will but humans do not. God's foreknowledge and predestinations are based only on His unconditional choice which is governed by His attributes of love, mercy, and goodness. (John 6:44; Ephesians 1:4, 5; 1 Peter 1:1, 2; Romans 9:10-25 are support verses.)
 2. Arminianism: God has a free will and humans have free enough wills. In this view, God knew in advance those that would eventually believe and then predestined and chose them for salvation. Therefore, God's choice was conditionally based on the result of who would believe. (Romans 10:13; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; 2 Peter 3:9; Ephesians 1:4, 5; 1 Peter 1:2 are support verses.)
 3. Some aspects of both views bound up in the mystery of God. (Deuteronomy 29:29; Psalm 19; Acts 14:15-17; 17:26-28; Romans 1:19, 20 are support verses.)

THOUGHT: It is interesting that Scripture places doctrines sometimes side by side that deal with God's sovereignty as well as human responsibility without explanation. Both are assumed true from a Biblical perspective. Could it be in Yahweh's plan that He wants us to believe that both are also true and that eternity's extra space and time dimensions will increase our ability to reason those things out both now and in the future?

- II. Every believer's salvation is eternally secure. Nothing can separate believers from the love of God (Romans 8:31-39).
- A. God has given us Christ and everything we will need for our continued growth in sanctification (verses 31, 32; 2 Peter 1:3, 4).
 - B. God has set up the parameters of our salvation, declared us righteous (justified us through faith in Christ), and through Christ's Spirit cares for us (verses 33, 34).
 - C. Believers can never be separated from the love of Christ or the love of God in Christ (verses 35-39).
 - 1. Presently believers have everything needed to conquer or win a most glorious victory in spite of the severe suffering in this world (verses 35-37).
 - 2. Presently and in the future, believers cannot be separated by the death of their mortal bodies, any angelic or demonic powers, or anything in this creation or the next! (verses 38, 39)

THOUGHT: Do you have doubts of your salvation? Why?

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL PART I: GOD'S TRUE CHILDREN BELIEVE THE PROMISED MESSAGE OF YAHWEH'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

ROMANS 9:1-13

Romans chapters 9-11 are considered parenthetical chapters between the key doctrinal chapters of 1-8 and the practical chapters of 12-16. The Apostle Paul has established in chapters 1-8 that individual belief in the scripturally promised message of Yahweh's righteousness which was ultimately given to us in Jesus Christ is the only basis for our salvation (Romans 1:16-17).

This salvation begins with our justification (where we are freed from the penalty of sin and declared righteous before God, Romans 3:21-5:11), continues on while we are present in our mortal bodies as sanctification (where we are little by little freed from the power of sin and set apart to God for holiness, Romans 5:12-8:11), and throughout eternity will continue on as our glorification (where we will be set free from the presence of sin, receive our new glorified bodies, and reign with Christ in His Millennial and New Heaven and Earth Kingdoms forever, Romans 8:12-39). The practical chapters of Romans 12-16 will teach us as eternally secured believers (Romans 8:29-39) how to live out true spiritual worship (Holy Spirit directed praise and life) in our daily lives as God's children and heirs. However, between the doctrine of Romans chapters 1-8 and the practical Christianity of Romans chapters 12-16, there is a problematic question in the Apostle Paul's mind as well as should be in all the minds of those who have read and understood Scripture which is, what happened to the nation of Israel? How is it that the nation of Israel which was chosen by Yahweh to bring the message of His righteousness and ultimately the person of His righteousness in Jesus Christ to this world has not overall believed the message or the person? In Romans chapters 9-11, the Apostle Paul is going to open his heart for us to catch a glimpse at his personal wrestling with this deeply personal and emotional issue of his much loved Israelite people. In the process, Paul explains for us that Yahweh God's sovereignty and power are still intact concerning His choosing of Israel to fulfill His specific world event purposes while at the same time holding the individual people of Israel responsible for their choice to believe or not believe in His gospel message. Paul also goes on to explain for us that the nation of Israel has stumbled through their unbelief (Romans 9:31-32) but that Yahweh has worked out His plan of bringing many Gentiles into His Kingdom while they are in their unbelief (Romans 11:11-25) and that ultimately Israel will turn back to the message of Yahweh's righteousness in Jesus Christ, receive forgiveness of sins and be restored as the nation of Yahweh in which Christ will rule the world (Romans 11:12, 15, 26-27).

- I. Paul confirms the nation of Israel's special place in God's purposes and grieves over its lack of response to Christ (verses 1-5).
 - A. Chapters 9 through 11 are written to explain to believers what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen to Israel.
 - B. A logical question for a believer who has been assured of God's reliability concerning his/ her eternal security (Romans 8:28-39) is: What is going on with God's chosen people Israel?
 - C. Paul's continual sorrow and pain over the nation of Israel is so great that he would give up his own salvation for theirs (verses 1-3).

D. In the past, God's plan through the nation of Israel has resulted in many blessings (verses 4-5) including:

1. The adoption (Jews being children of God, Deuteronomy 14:1; Exodus 4:22)
2. The glory (the times when God revealed His Presence, Exodus 24:17)
3. The covenants (i.e. the Abrahamic, Genesis 12, 15; the Davidic, 2 Samuel 7; the New, Jeremiah 31)
4. The receiving of the Law, Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5)
5. The temple worship (Exodus and Leviticus)
6. The promises (given in the covenants and other prophecies)
7. The patriarchs (i.e. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)
8. The human ancestry of Christ (Messiah, Matthew 1; Luke 3)
9. The spiritual ancestry of Christ is God and, therefore, Christ is God over all, blessed forever! (Colossians 1:15-20, 2:9).

THOUGHT: What is the difference between religion and relationship when it comes to God? Which have you had this week?

II. Even though many in the nation of Israel have rejected Christ, God's word and selection purposes for the nation of Israel on a national and world event scale have not failed (verses 6-13).

A. Everybody born as national Israelites are not children of God (verses 6-9).

1. The promises of God were not given to all of Abraham's seeds (descendants) but to one specific seed, Isaac, who was according to the promise (verses 6-9; Genesis 21:12).
2. Paul clearly states that the promised seed ultimately speaks of Christ (Galatians 3:16).
3. All those who believe in the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ are children of God (John 1:12; Romans 3:22, 8:14-21).

B. God's purpose has stood and continues to stand because of His election (ekloga-selection, choice) (verses 10-13).

1. God's election is not based on a persons or nations moral goodness, works, or birth order. God's choice happens way before these (verses 10-12; Ephesians 1:4).
2. The idea of hating and loving as used in verse 13 is not based on God's temperament but is based on God's election (choice).

- a. This is a Hebrew idiom (figure of speech) where the opposite is used to express a lesser degree (Genesis 29:30-31; Luke 14:26).
- b. The eternal plans of Yahweh with the nations that come from Jacob and Esau are what is elected, not the individual salvation of these men. The nations of Israel from Jacob and Edom from Esau had very different paths in Yahweh's eternal plans. However, each person in these nations were held individually responsible for their choice concerning believing in Yahweh's promise of salvation (Genesis 25:23; Malachi 1:2-3 written about 1,500 years after Jacob and Esau's births).
- c. God did provide for Esau (Genesis chapters 33, 36; Deuteronomy 23:7-8) and blessed him and his family in certain ways (Genesis 33:4-17).

THOUGHT: Why should it comfort and encourage believers to know that God's word and purpose cannot fail?

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL PART II: ISRAEL STUMBLER BY NOT BELIEVING THE PROMISED MESSAGE OF YAHWEH'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

ROMANS 9:14-33

- I. Yahweh cannot be accused by the nation of Israel or anybody else of injustice or unfairness because Yahweh has consistently responded in mercy toward belief and hardening (giving people up or over to their own sin) toward unbelief. The Apostle Paul gives us the examples of Moses and Pharaoh from Scripture to illustrate this point (Romans 9:14-18).
 - A. Yahweh responds to Moses' prayer of intercession and trust in Yahweh's promises for the nation of Israel by displaying mercy toward Moses and Israel and revealing His supernatural glory at Mount Sinai (verses 14-15; Exodus 33:12, 34:6; the quote is from Exodus 33:19).
 - B. The Apostle Paul then explains further that the mercy (Greek "eleos," the kindness or goodwill toward the miserable or afflicted) of Yahweh God is distributed sovereignly only by God Himself. The mercy of God is not given to any human on the basis of how much a person wills it for himself or on the basis of human exertion (Greek "trekontos" which means running). The Apostle Paul has already taught us in the first eight chapters of the book of Romans that it is only belief in the message and person of the righteousness of God which opens Yahweh's outpouring of mercy, grace, and salvation to each individual (verse 16; Romans 1:16-17; 12:1, Paul considers the whole plan of salvation entered into by individual belief as "the mercies of God.")
 - C. Yahweh responds to Pharaoh's unbelief and lack of trust by allowing Pharaoh to be hardened in his unbelief. This lack of belief on Pharaoh's part opened the way for Yahweh to display His glory and deliver Israel as a nation from Egyptian slavery (verses 17-18).
 1. All the way through the Biblical account about Pharaoh, Pharaoh hardens his own heart (Exodus 8:32) because of his unbelief. However, in the larger picture of God's sovereignty and election (choice, selection), it is said that God is in control of the events and brings about His glory through the hardening of Pharaoh's heart by God Himself (Exodus 10:1). In other words, human responsibility and God's sovereignty are both true Biblical concepts.
 2. Pharaoh is held accountable for his unbelief (Exodus 5:2), rebellion, and he progressively hardens his own heart while God seems to give him over to his own sinful way (like in Romans 1:18-32 and Romans 2:4-5).

THOUGHT: Meditate on Romans 2:4. How is God's kindness, forbearance, and patience trying to lead you to repentance today and this week?

- II. It was prophesied in Scripture that the nation of Israel would have a time in history where there would be very few believers in the message of the righteousness of God, and as we now ultimately know it, in the gospel message of Jesus Christ. During this time of Israel's unbelief, stumbling, and hardening, Yahweh will temporarily turn to predominantly Gentile (non-Israelite) believers to carry His gospel message to the nations before eventually turning back to a believing nation of Israel (Romans 9:19-33).

- A. The nation of Israel cannot claim that Yahweh is unfair and that they are not responsible for their own unbelief (verses 19-29).
1. The three main references in Old Testament Scriptures which discuss the potter and the clay all deal with Yahweh's right as the potter to mold the clay of the nation of Israel as He chooses. The two passages in Isaiah 29:16 and Jeremiah 18:6 are prophecies dealing with the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians (between 605 and 586 B.C.) because of Israel's unbelief. The passage in Isaiah 64:8 is a prophetic passage of what appears to be Israel's repentance and belief before Christ's Millennial and Eternal Kingdoms are established (verses 19-23; Isaiah 59:20-66:24; Romans 11:26- 27).
 - a. As has been shown in Paul's discussion of Pharaoh and Romans 2:4, 5, vessels of wrath are unbelievers who refuse to repent and believe the gospel (verse 22; 2 Peter 3:9-13).
 - b. The vessels of mercy are believers who are justified in the message of the righteousness of God in the person of Jesus Christ and, therefore, are eternally secure now and assured of the glorified life of reigning with Christ in their resurrected and glorified bodies (verse 23; Romans 1:16-17; 3:22-24; 5:1-11; 8:12-39).
 2. All believers in the Scriptural message of the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ, no matter whether they are Jews by nationality or Gentiles, are called Yahweh's people and beloved (loved ones) according to Hosea 2:23 and sons and daughters of the living God according to Hosea 1:10 (verse 24-26).
 3. Prophetically a small remnant of Israelite believers will continue in each generation until national Israel once again returns to their faith in the righteousness of God through the person of Jesus Christ (Messiah) in a similar way (only on a much larger scale) as what happened during their Babylonian captivity (verses 27-29; Isaiah 1:9, 10:22-23).
- B. Paul's Israel and present day Israel have only a remnant of children of God (believers of the promise, Romans 9:8) because they have stumbled according to the Scriptures. They are pursuing a righteousness or their justification before God based on works rather than the righteousness or justification of God which can only be provided in the person of Jesus Christ by faith (verses 30-33; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 8:14-15; 28:16)

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL PART III: PRESENTLY THE PROMISED MESSAGE CONTINUES THROUGH BELIEVING ISRAEL AND BELIEVING GENTILES

ROMANS 10:1-11:11

- I. Paul's heart's desire and prayer to God is for the salvation of his fellow Israelites (Romans 10:1-4).
 - A. Salvation (sotarian) includes justification, sanctification, glorification, deliverance from God's wrath, and deliverance from wrong thinking (verse 1; Romans 1:16-18; see also Romans 1:19-8:39).
 - B. Even though Paul understood God's election and foreknowledge, it didn't stop him from serving or praying (verse 1; Romans 8:28-9:33).
 - C. Paul seemed to have a "both and" mentality rather than an "either or" mentality when it came to God's sovereignty and human responsibility (verse 1; Romans 8:26-27; Acts 17:24- 28; see also Joel 2:32).
 - D. Paul sums up the attitude of the Israelites of his day as having a zeal (Greek "zalon" which means strive, desire, exert oneself earnestly) for God but not according to correct knowledge. In other words, they were trying to will or exert their way to God rather than believe the gospel message (verse 2; Romans 1:16-17; Romans 9:16, 30-33)
 - E. Trying to achieve righteousness (a right standing with God) by works will accomplish self- righteousness. Believing in the work of Christ fulfills God's righteousness (verses 3-4; Romans 1:16, 17; Ephesians 2:8-9).

THOUGHT: How do you see God's sovereignty and human responsibility working together? Are there people around you that have a zeal for God not according to knowledge? How can you be used by God to help them?

- II. Being declared righteous by God (justification) and living out your salvation (sanctification) happens by believing the gospel and confessing that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:5-15).
 - A. Trying to be righteous before God by the Law demands 100% accuracy (verse 5; Leviticus 18:5; Galatians 3:11-12) which for us is impossible (Romans 3:20).
 - B. Attaining your righteousness before God by faith is not only possible but is there for the asking (verses 6-15).
 1. Israel was supposed to understand the concept of justification by faith from the Old Testament and from Moses himself (verses 6-13; Genesis 15:6).
 - a. Moses not only brought the Law, he also brought the concepts of forgiveness, hope, and an inner life of faith (verses 6-8; Deuteronomy 9:4; 30:6-20).

b. Paul's message is similar to Moses' except that now Jesus has come, fulfilled the Law, and started the New Covenant (verses 9, 10; Jeremiah 31:31-34; 1 Corinthians 11:25).

- i. The mouth and heart coincide with confess and believe and the order comes from Moses in Deuteronomy 30:14.
- ii. Confess (homologeō) means to "say the same thing" in regards to the person and provider of our faith.
- iii. Believing in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead brings to an individual justification (being declared righteous). This would be the same as believing that the message of God's righteousness and forgiveness of sin was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ alone (verses 9b, 10a, 11; Isaiah 28:16; Romans 1:16; 2:21-23; 5:1).
- iv. Confessing and calling upon the name of the Lord (Yahweh) with your mouth brings about more of the present and future aspects of salvation. The confession "Jesus is Lord" was the earliest declaration of faith by the early church (Acts 2:36; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Philippians 2:11). A believer receives help, grows in his/her sanctification salvation, and receives God's riches in Christ as he/she calls upon the name of the Lord (verses 9a, 10b, 12-13; Joel 2:32; Romans 8:1-11).

2. According to Paul, National Israel (Israelites) cannot claim to call upon the name of Yahweh because they have for the most part not believed in Yahweh's righteous message or Yahweh's righteous person. The gospel (good news) is to be brought to everyone by people who have believed and have been sent (verses 14-15; Isaiah 52:7; Romans 1:5).

THOUGHT: How does God send people to give out His good news? Does this passage teach that only missionaries to exotic foreign countries are God's sent ones or that all believers are supposed to be God's sent ones?

III. Even though most of the Israelites are not believing the promised message, God's plan is still right on track (Romans 10:16-11:11).

A. Israel has both heard and understood but has been disobedient to the message (Romans 10:16-21; Psalm 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:21; Isaiah 65:1-2).

B. God has not pushed away (rejected) Israel but Israel has pushed away God for the most part. During the present church age, there will always be some Israelites who will believe that are both foreknown and chosen (elected). Romans 11:5 tells us that the remnant are chosen or elected according to grace (God's unmerited favor, like a free gift in Romans 3:24) rather than by human works (Romans 11:1-7; 1 Kings 19:10-18).

C. From the time of Christ until the rapture of the church (coinciding with the fullness of the Gentiles), modern Israelites are predominantly callused (hardened-like a thick layer over their hearts), blinded, and deafened by God giving them over to their disobedience (Romans 11:8-10, Romans 11:25; Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah 29:10; John 12:37-42).

D. God has both allowed for National Israel's disobedience and planned for this to bring in the full amount of believing Gentiles and to make Israel jealous. In Yahweh's plan, these events will spur on the restoration of National Israel to belief in the gospel message and person of Jesus the Christ (Messiah) and the eventual reconciliation of the world through Christ's future Kingdom reign in Israel (verse 11; Romans 11:15, 25-27).

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL PART IV: THERE IS A BRIGHT FUTURE RECOVERY COMING FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL

ROMANS 11:11-36

- I. The stumbling of the nation of Israel in unbelief opens a way of greater spiritual blessings to the rest of the world (Romans 11:11-12).
 - A. Israel has stumbled but they will recover (verse 11; Isaiah 27:6; 59:20, 21; Ezekiel 37:1-28; Romans 11:25-27).
 1. Through Israel's sin of unbelief, God has now temporarily chosen to work His kingdom program through gospel churches throughout the world (verse 11a; Ephesians 2:14-22).
 2. The believing Gentiles throughout the world should provoke Israel to jealousy. The nation of Israel should see that the very same God of Israel is now alive and active in the predominately Gentile church (verse 11b; Ephesians 3:4-11).
 - B. As the gospel is received, it produces spiritual life in the individual believer's life. As many believers are disciplined in churches to produce fruit, they bless the church, the community, and the world. The Apostle Paul lets us know that when the nation of Israel returns in faith to the gospel, even more riches and blessing awaits! (verse 12; Romans 7:4, 10:12, 12:1, 14- 21)

THOUGHT: How does God's kingdom program through the church bring blessings to the world?

- II. Gentile believers should not become prideful or arrogant about the nation of Israel's time of mostly unbelief (Romans 11:13-27).
 - A. As the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul has a two-pronged strategy. This involves witnessing the gospel message to receptive Gentiles while at the same time making Israel jealous as they see the reality of God among the Gentiles (verses 13-14; Acts 15).
 - B. Paul hints that Israel will one day receive Christ as a nation and bring about life from the dead (verses 15-16).
 1. The reference "life from the dead" could be a reference to the resurrection of our new spiritual bodies and the beginning of Christ's millennial reign on earth (verse 15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:20-25; Revelation 1:5-8, 20:1-6).
 2. The first fruits of verse 16a were the first offering of grain to the Lord of the newly ripened harvest (remnant Israel). These were then baked into a cake of dough (the whole batch, the converted nation) and offered before the Lord (Numbers 15:18-21).
 3. The root of verse 16b consists of the covenantal promises (i.e. Abrahamic-Genesis 12, 15; Davidic-2 Samuel 7; New-Jeremiah 31) and everything else included in Romans 9:4-5. The branches are potential believers sprouting out from the root of Israel's faith (Jeremiah 11:16).

C. God's kingdom program starts and ends with the nation of Israel and the faith as delivered through it. Gentiles need to be careful not to become arrogant concerning the nation of Israel because belief will bring them back (verses 17-27).

1. The believing Gentiles might forget God's promises to the nation of Israel. Through the metaphor of the olive tree, the Apostle Paul illustrates his message (verses 17-24).

a. The branches broken off of the cultivated olive tree represent the stumbling and lack of faith which the overall nation of Israel is expressing in the Apostle Paul's day in regards to the gospel message about the righteousness of God in the person of Jesus Christ (Romans 9:32-10:4). Because Israel's belief has been reduced to a small remnant of Israelite believers (Romans 9:29, 10:20, 11:5), the predominant place in this world for the nation of Israel as Yahweh's light, salvation bringer and blesser, has been temporarily reduced. This is what is meant by the phrase "some of the branches broken off." This temporary reduction of Israel's witness and light is being filled by the new predominantly Gentile believers in the church which is being referred to as a "grafted in" wild olive shoot (verse 17; Ephesians 3:4-11).

b. The correct attitude for Gentile believers in the church is humility and a gracious attitude which says, 'branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in' (verses 18-20).

c. If and when the predominantly Gentile church turns from belief in the true Scriptural gospel about God's provision for our sins in the person of Jesus Christ which Paul discussed in Romans chapters 1-8, then the church as God's light, salvation bringer and blesser, could also be set aside (branches broken off). The message is always consistent that God's mercy is expressed towards belief and God's hardening or severity when persistent unbelief is present (verses 21-22; Romans 3:21-26, 9:14-18, 11:28-32).

d. The metaphor wraps up with the possibility that the nation of Israel will once again return as a nation to predominant faith (instead of remnant faith) and be restored as God's light, salvation bringer and blesser. In this metaphor, this means they will "be grafted back into their own olive tree" (verses 23-24).

2. The Savior will fulfill all His promises to the nation of Israel (verses 25-27).

a. Scripturally and prophetically the "fullness of the Gentiles" lines up with the rapture of the church or fairly close to the rapture of the church during Israel's seven year tribulation (verse 25; Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15-30; Revelation 7:1-17).

b. Scripturally and prophetically Jesus Christ will rule a unified believing nation of Israel. The term Zion can mean the nation of Israel, Jerusalem, or the temple mount prophetically (verses 26-27; Isaiah 27:1-13, 59:15-21).

THOUGHT: What are some ways in which Gentile unbelievers and believers have been prideful and arrogant toward Israelites?

III. The plans of God concerning the nation of Israel, the church, and the gospel are awesome, mysterious, and unsearchable (verses 28-36).

A. The gospel of salvation (faith in God's ability to save through Christ) is God's plan for sinners in the Old and New Testament. It is 100% reliable and certain (verses 28a, 30-32).

B. God's election (choice) of the nation of Israel to be His instrument to reveal the message and person of the gospel to the nations as well as be the nation in which Christ will rule and reign through is certain. They are certain to be a light in the Millennium, the New Heaven, and New Earth and throughout eternity. Paul ends this section which wraps up the understanding of the gospel (in Romans chapters 1-8) and understanding God's plan for Israel (in Romans chapters 9-11) with a powerful benediction of praise (verses 28b-29, 33-36; Psalm 2:1-12; Psalm 110:1-7, 145:1-13; Isaiah 9:1-7, 11:1-12:6, 27:1-13, 52:1-12, 59:15-21, Ezekiel 39:25-29; Daniel 7:13-27; Matthew 24:15-31; Acts 1:6-8; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Revelation 19:1-22:5).

AN OVERVIEW OF A BELIEVER'S SPIRITUAL WORSHIP IN LIGHT OF THE NEW COVENANT GOSPEL OF CHRIST

ROMANS 12:1, 2

The book of Romans has three main sections to it, and Romans 12:1-16:27 is the third section which deals with practical Christianity. The Apostle Paul established the doctrinal section in Romans chapters 1-8 which explains in detail that individual salvation is only found in believing the message of God's righteousness provided in the person of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16-17; 2:4). Through individual belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ, each believing sinner is immediately justified (freed from sin's penalty, given a new nature, along with the indwelling Holy Spirit, and given peace with God, Romans 3:21-5:11). With the guarantee and eternal security of eternal life with God forever, a believer is urged to live a life growing in sanctification (set apart to God to grow in holiness and righteousness) now (Romans 5:12-8:11) while awaiting his/her glorification (new resurrected body and reigning with Christ in His Millennial and New Earth Kingdoms) in the future (Romans 8:12-39). After establishing the doctrinal section, the Apostle Paul discussed in great detail God's plan for the nation of Israel in the second section which can be designated a parenthetical section. In this second section, Yahweh's plan for the nation of Israel concerning its past (before the first coming of Jesus Christ), present (as remnant believers during this current time of Jesus' church on earth), and future (the nation of Israel's return to belief in Jesus Christ and the nation through which Jesus reigns) is explained (Romans 9:1-11:36). Now with our doctrinal foundation established and our questions regarding the nation of Israel answered, the Apostle Paul now turns his attention to this third and last section in the book of Romans. In this section, we as believers will learn how to practically live out our faith in the new way of the Holy Spirit (now that Christ has come and the New Covenant has begun) rather than trying to live out our faith in the old way (before Christ came and the Old or Mosaic Covenant was temporarily in place). We are going to learn that being New Covenant Christians who are growing in sanctification, who are called "spiritual worshippers" (Romans 12:1) by the Apostle Paul, involves a combination of applying Scriptural doctrine to our moment by moment experience through the presenting of our bodies as living sacrifices, not being conformed to this world, and being transformed by the renewing of our minds. May our wonderful Yahweh Father, Son, and Holy Spirit help us and strengthen us as we seek to obey Him from our hearts "as slaves of righteousness leading to sanctification" (Romans 6:17-19).

- I. As justified believers who have participated and experienced the mercies of God through belief in Jesus Christ, we should make the commitment to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1).
 - A. The Apostle Paul appeals to his fellow justified believers as brothers and sisters in the same eternal family of God (verse 1a).
 1. The word "appeal" comes from the Greek word "parakaleo" and besides appeal means to urge, exhort, comfort, and encourage.
 2. The word itself when broken into its parts creates the image of "to call to ones' side" or "to invite beside" and it is, therefore, a gentle, comforting way in which the Apostle Paul urges his fellow believers at the start of this section on practical Christianity and sanctification to listen to and apply what he says.

B. The mercies (compassions or pity) of God in this context are everything which has been discussed so far in the book of Romans concerning this wonderful salvation. Sinful people can now enter individual belief into the message and provision of God's righteousness in Jesus Christ and be assured of their justification (freedom from sins' penalty, forgiveness of sins, a new nature, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and peace with God) as they move into their current life of sanctification (set apart for a life of holiness and righteousness) (verse 1b, Romans 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 5:1-5; 6:16-19; 9:11-13).

C. The ideas of presenting our "bodies as a living sacrifice" and "spiritual worship" are designed to bring us into a volitional commitment as well as internally and rationally increasing our understanding of what New Covenant service in Christ looks like (verse 1c).

1. The word "present" comes from the Greek word "paristami" which means "to place beside" and in the Hebrew context was used in the sense of presenting a sacrifice before God in either the Tabernacle or Temple. Under the Old (Mosaic) Covenant system, believers were supposed to bring the prescribed sacrifices (animal, grain, or drink) to be offered by the priest in a holy (set apart for the purposes of God) and acceptable (also means well-pleasing, usually the right sacrifice without blemish) manner as worship (Leviticus 1:1-7:38; Malachi 1:6-14).

2. In the New Covenant context which believers have now entered into in Christ, the sacrifice is now to be our living mortal bodies rather than the animals that died under the Old Covenant. The idea the Apostle Paul is bringing up is similar to what has previously been discussed in Romans 6:12-19 where believers are not supposed to let sin reign in their mortal bodies but are to present themselves to God for His righteous purposes.

3. When New Covenant believers present their living mortal bodies to God properly, the Apostle Paul calls this "spiritual worship" which could be defined as rational God-honoring service.

a. The word "spiritual" does not come from the Greek word "pneuma" where we would get the idea of the Holy Spirit but rather comes from the Greek word "logikos" where we get the idea of logical, rational, or spiritual (in the sense of inside us). The only other time this word is used in the New Testament is I Peter 2:2 for "pure spiritual milk."

b. The word "worship" comes from the Greek word "latreia" and has to do with priestly service and worship before God relating to the Old Covenant sacrifices in the Tabernacle or Temple.

THOUGHT: Have you ever presented your living mortal body to the service of God? Considering everything we have been given as believers, this is what is rational and reasonable. Commit yourself to pray and do this today and this week.

II. A justified believer continues to live out his/her commitment to present his/her mortal body as a living sacrifice to God by not doing one thing and by doing one thing (Romans 12:2).

A. A believer is not to be conformed to this world (verse 12:2a).

1. The word "conformed" comes from the Greek root "schema" which is taking on the same outward appearance, form, shape, mold of something else.
2. The word "world" is really the Greek word "aioni" which translates to "age" and gives the idea of something being of a certain fixed time when it is by itself. By using this word, the Apostle Paul is expressing that this present world we live in is temporary and will not last. With this in mind, a believer should live for the eternal age to come rather than this temporary life with its' sinful and evil desires (1 Corinthians 7:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Galatians 1:4; Hebrews 6:5).

B. A believer is to be transformed by the renewing of his/her mind (verse 12:2b).

1. Instead of being conformed to this age, a believer is designed to be transformed, from the Greek word "metamorphoo" which is defined as "to change in form." Jesus was transformed (also called transfigured) on the Mount (Matthew 17:2; Mark 9:2).
2. Inside each believer is his/her mind (Greek "nous") which is the faculty of intellect, thought, and moral understanding. A believer is called to live a life of constant renewal by taking the truths of Scripture (Romans 6:17, 15:4) under the influence of the Holy Spirit and applying them in a moment by moment way to his/her life. As a believer does this, he/she is transformed into the same image of Christ from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Ephesians 4:23-24; Colossians 3:10). As a believer's mind is constantly renewed, he/she is testing (in the sense of analyzing and approving) the will of God as it relates specifically to his/her moment by moment sanctification (in this specific context) and finds it good, acceptable (well-pleasing as in Romans 12:1), and perfect (complete and able to bring to full completion what was promised).

THOUGHT: Actively apply this Scripture to your mind this week by not conforming to this temporary age but instead living a constant transformed life through renewing your mind.

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP INVOLVES A HUMBLE MIND AND USING OUR ASSIGNED SPIRITUAL GIFTS PROPERLY

ROMANS 12:3-8

The Apostle Paul started his teaching for us on practical Christianity in Romans 12:1-2 with an appeal for every believer to present their mortal bodies as a living sacrifice before God. He explained that an individual who does this on a moment by moment basis doesn't allow himself/herself to be conformed to this world but rather is transformed by a constant renewal of their mind in the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. As a believer lives this out, he or she brings about true spiritual worship (rational God-honoring service) in this time of the church and beginning phase of the New Covenant. Having established the foundation for a believer's individual spiritual worship, the Apostle Paul's purpose now in Romans 12:3-8 (and following) is to teach each believer that he/she is also part of a larger community of believers called the body of Christ (or the Church, Ephesians 5:23-30). In Romans 12:3-8, the Apostle Paul teaches believers three main points.

- I. Each believer has at least one assigned grace gift by God and needs to think about their assigned gift or gifts in a sound, sober, and humble manner (Romans 12:3).
 - A. The Apostle Paul uses the word "think" in one form or another four times in this one verse in Greek. The Greek word "phroneo" means to think, form or hold an opinion, set ones mind on, or have an attitude towards. Believers are not supposed to think "high" thoughts (huperphronein) about their assigned gift(s) but rather to think "sound, reasonable, moderate, sensible" thoughts (sophronein).
 - B. It is God Himself who assigned our gift or gifts to each one of us and as we grow in Christ, each believer is to find and use his/her gift(s) according to a hard to understand phrase called "the measure of faith." From a doctrinal standpoint, this is something beyond the justification faith used in Romans 3:22 and is more than likely the ability to believe or trust God in greater or lesser ways as we serve Him and interact with Scripture (see also the similarity of Romans 12:6).
- II. Each believer is part of the larger body of Christ which is made up of many believers with different functions and different gifts (Romans 12:4-6a; 1 Corinthians 12:4-13; Ephesians 5:23-30).
- III. Each believer has at least one of the seven gifts (from verse 6a, grace gifts, Greek "charismata") listed by the Apostle Paul in this passage (Romans 12:6b-8).
 - A. Prophecy involves communicating truth from God and acting as His spokesperson in a given situation. It can involve foretelling future events or forthtelling (speaking forth) the things of God for the moment. Prophecy is to be given out in proportion (Greek "analogian" can be translated analogy) to the faith. The words of the prophecy and Scripture must be in agreement, correspond and be analogous to each other (verse 6b; Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 18:20-22; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 14:29-37; I John 4:1-6).
 - B. Serving (ministry, from the Greek "diakonia," the root of deacon or deaconess), teaching, and exhortation (Greek "parakalon" means to encourage, comfort, support) have no additional explanation attached to them. The use of Scripture in specific ways while using these gifts might be implied by the arrangement (verses 7-8a; Acts 14:22; Romans 6:17, Romans 15:4-5).

C. Contributing (giving) should be done with generosity (the ideas of a sincere heart and without guile or deceit). Leading (to stand on the first place, preside) should be done with zeal (eagerness, diligence, earnestness). Mercy (feeling God's pity resulting in helping) should be done with cheerfulness (gladness, graciousness) (verse 8b, c, d; Acts 5:36-37; 1 Timothy 5:17; Romans 9:30-32).

THOUGHT: The gift or gifts assigned to you as a believer are designed to build up the body of Christ by you learning how to use them properly and effectively. Your mental attitude, knowledge about the body of Christ as well as Scripture, and understanding of your specific gift or gifts influence how effective you will be.

IV. For the purpose of bringing out a broader Scriptural understanding concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit (as exegeted in the book of Romans) and how this relates to the rest of the New Testament, I have included some of my teaching on the gifts and manifestations of the Holy Spirit. This can be found in its entirety on the Red Mountain Community Church website. There are six places in New Testament Scriptures that give believers partial lists of gifts, ministries, and manifestations of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 7:7-11, 12:8-10, 12:28-30; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11).

A. They are difficult to organize and prioritize because the Holy Spirit distributes His "grace" gifts (Romans 12:3) for the "common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7) of the body "to each one of us" (Ephesians 4:7). Therefore, each believer and each local congregation will have a different mixture assigned by the measuring hand of Yahweh Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-7; Romans 12:3; Ephesians 4:7).

B. The New Testament Scriptures reveal around 22 gifts, ministries, and manifestations of the Holy Spirit, some of which are repeated in several lists. Since none of the lists are the same, the Holy Spirit seems to be instructing us not to be overly rigid in analyzing His activity in us and Christ's Church. Rather, we are to learn what we can and be like our fellow Old Testament believers who were "carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

C. In 1 Corinthians 12:1-7, the Apostle Paul instructs us concerning the things of the Holy Spirit which in the Greek is the word "pneumatikon" (1 Corinthians 12:1). This word can also be translated spirituals, spiritual things, or spiritual matters. He then tells us about three aspects of the things the Holy Spirit called gifts, ministries, and manifestations (also called activities or energizings) (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

1. Gifts come from the Greek word "charismaton" (1 Corinthians 12:4) which originated from the word "charis" meaning grace or unmerited favor. Therefore, these are favors and gifts freely and graciously bestowed upon believers by Yahweh Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each believer has at least one gift given at the time of belief (Romans 12:4-6; Ephesians 4:7).
2. Ministries or service come from the Greek word "diakonion" (1 Corinthians 12:5) and means servant, helper, or an official who was placed in authority to help or serve in certain ways. These seem to be gift mixes sovereignly given by Yahweh to certain people in the Church to be servant leaders to others (Ephesians 4:11-13).

3. Manifestations come from the Greek word "phanerosis" (1 Corinthians 12:7) meaning reveal, make known, make visible, and disclose. This seems to be used in the same way as the activities or energizings of the Holy Spirit found in 1 Corinthians 12:6. Manifestations seem to be Holy Spirit inspired activities which make His work visible and known to believers in the Church who witness these activities (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).

D. Final considerations for the Church concerning the Spirit's gifts and manifestations.

1. They will last in their present form until Christ returns and then be superseded by something more complete and greater since we will see Christ face to face (1 Corinthians 1:7, 13:10).
2. Demonstrating love to other believers by helping to encourage them, mature them, and equip them for increased ministry in the Church is the goal of using them (1 Corinthians 14:1; Ephesians 4:12).
3. Avoid confusion and strive for peace or shalom (1 Corinthians 14:32). All things should be done decently and in order in Christ's Church (1 Corinthians 14:40).
4. Believers should not forbid any of the Holy Spirit's gifts or manifestations (1 Corinthians 14:39) as long as they are done Scripturally. Forbidding the Biblical use of tongues or despising prophecies can quench (put out) the Holy Spirit's fire (1 Thessalonians 5:19- 20).
5. Believers should test everything and hold fast to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP HAS A PERSONAL ASPECT, A BODY OF CHRIST ASPECT, AND A LIVING IN THIS WORLD ASPECT

ROMANS 12:9-21

In Romans chapters 12 through 16, the Apostle Paul is teaching already justified believers how to practically grow in our faith in a personal way (sanctification) while living out our faith in the body of Christ as well as the world we live in. He has already explained that we as believers should be on a moment by moment journey in our spiritual worship (rational God-honoring service) by actively pursuing inner life transformation (Romans 12:1-2) while using our God-assigned gift or gifts in the body of Christ (Romans 12:3-8). Now in this passage of Romans 12:9-21, the Apostle Paul is increasing the understanding of believers by giving us some practical details on this life of love and how it should be lived out not only in the body of Christ but also in the world which is hostile towards us and our faith.

- I. Spiritual worship in a believer's personal transformation involves growth in the three characteristics of genuine love, abhorrence of evil, and holding firm to what is good (Romans 12:9).
 - A. Believers should be growing in genuine love (verse 9a).
 1. The Apostle Paul is consistent in pointing out that a believers life in the Holy Spirit is demonstrated by a certain kind of love. Whether using our God-assigned gifts, ministries, and manifestations (1 Corinthians 13:4-13) or having the fruit of the Holy Spirit demonstrated to anyone around us (Galatians 5:22-23), we are to be practically living out this certain kind of genuine love.
 2. Since God is love (1 John 4:8) and God and His love now lives inside of His believers in Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit, then every believer now has the ability to demonstrate love (which I would define as perfectly combined patience, kindness, attitude, and action) to those around them.
 3. The word "genuine" is the Greek word "anupokritos" which can also be translated without hypocrisy and sincere. The word is designed to test our motivation, attitude, and the source of the expression of love. Is it coming from the inner depths of our being which has been led by the Holy Spirit through the grid of Scripture or is it coming from our flesh? (2 Corinthians 6:6; 1 Peter 1:22)
 - B. Believers should be growing in abhorrence of evil (verse 9b). They should abhor (despise, hate bitterly, have a strong feeling of horror) the evil (wickedness, the opposite of God and His Scriptural plan) things in the world while still loving the people and God's creation. In other words, believers should hate the sin but love the sinners (John 3:16; Romans 2:4; 2 Peter 3:15; Jude 22-23).
 - C. Believers should be growing in their ability to hold fast to what is good (verse 9c). On a moment by moment basis, believers should find themselves "clinging to" or "glued to" the intrinsically useful and eternally valuable things of God and His Kingdom rather than ungodliness and evil (Psalm 1:1-6; Philippians 4:8-9).

THOUGHT: Which of these three characteristics do you need to pursue and have developed in your life through the Holy Spirit?

- II. Spiritual worship in the body of Christ involves humbly growing in our relationships with other believers, learning how to encourage and care for one another in this needy world, and learning how to live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:10-16).
- A. We as believers should be growing in our relationships with one another (verses 10-12).
1. The Apostle Paul consistently uses the term "one another" concerning relationships within the body of Christ (Galatians 5:20-21, 6:2; Ephesians 4:32, 5:21; Colossians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11). This passage uses "one another" consistently starting with verse 10 through verse 16.
 2. As the family of God, we as believers show love for each other with brotherly love (Greek "philadelphia") in a tender or affectionate manner (1 Thessalonians 4:9). We also should honor (appreciate, give recognition to) our fellow believers as family members and fellow heirs of the Kingdom above ourselves (verse 10; Romans 8:17, 12:3; Philippians 2:3).
 3. Our zeal (effort, diligence, earnestness, devotion) should not be slothful (idle, lazy) and our spirit (probably the inner core of our being or could be the Holy Spirit) should be fervent (boiling, eager) as we serve the Lord in the body of Christ (verse 11; Romans 1:9; 1 Corinthians 2:11; Galatians 6:9-10).
 4. We encourage one another to lives of rejoicing hope (our future life with Christ in service to Him in His Kingdom, Romans 5:2; Romans 8:24, 25) and consistent persevering prayer so that we can be patient (endure) in our tribulations (afflictions) (verse 12; Psalm 28:6- 9; Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12-13; Revelation 14:12-13).
- B. We as believers should be growing in our care for one another in this needy world (verses 13-15).
1. We are to contribute (from the Greek word "koinonia," partner, share, participate) to the needs (necessities) of the saints (other believers) and pursue hospitality (Greek "philozenia," love of strangers) by offering things like food and lodging in our homes (verse 13; 1 Peter 4:8-9).
 2. We are to bless (speak good things of, provide with benefits) our persecutors (those who run us down and pursue us) and not curse (say or invoke a curse) them. As part of the body of Christ, we are to encourage each other in this (verse 14; Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27-28).
 3. We are to be emotionally available to our brothers and sisters in Christ by rejoicing and weeping with them (verse 15; 1 Corinthians 12:26; Philippians 4:4).
- C. We as believers should be learning how to live in harmony with one another. The word harmony comes from several Greek words meaning "to think the same thing towards." In the body of Christ, we can do this because we are learning how to give up our "high" and prideful thoughts about ourselves and others and rather choose to associate ourselves with the lowly and ordinary (verse 16; Proverbs 3:7; Romans 12:3).

THOUGHT: As you evaluate your life in relationship to Christ's Church or Body, which area is the Holy Spirit speaking to you about in this list for your growth?

III. Spiritual worship involves overcoming evil with good as we live with the difficulties of this sinful world (Romans 12:17-21).

A. We as believers have a responsibility to live out our faith before all people in a way which doesn't repay evil for evil, in a way which is honorable (in the Greek "providing good things for them"), and in a way which promotes peace as much as is possible from our end of things (verses 17-18; Matthew 5:38-42; Luke 6:29-30).

B. Believers are not to avenge (procure justice) for themselves as they are mistreated or abused in this world but rather to commit themselves to God's future justice and figure out how to bless their persecutors instead (verses 19-21).

1. Vengeance is not a believers place but it is God's and everything will be made right in the future by Him (verse 19; Deuteronomy 32:35).
2. Even though believers have not been given the right to avenge themselves, God has given governments the right to "bear the sword" and "be an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer"(Romans 13:4).
3. We are instead of avenging ourselves supposed to give food and drink to our enemies and provide for their needs. In context to "heap burning coals on his head" graphically illustrates an enemy's consternation at seeing a believer react in blessing and kindness towards them. Our prayer is that this will bring about our enemy's repentance and salvation (verses 20-21; Proverbs 25:21-22).

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP INVOLVES SUBMITTING TO GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

ROMANS 13:1-7

As justified believers seek to live their lives out according to the "renewed mind" and "transformed" way of the Romans 12:1-2 passage, the Apostle Paul explains how this process is designed to effect the totality of our lives. He has already told us that our personal transformation (Romans 12:1-2, 9), our relationships in Christ's Church (Romans 12:3-8, 10-16), and our relationships in the world (Romans 12:17-21) should be effected in profound ways. He now, in this section of Scripture, wants the transformation process to affect how we relate to the government authorities in which we live and interact. When the Apostle Paul wrote this in 57 A.D., the unpredictable reign of Emperor Nero had started in 54 A.D. and would continue on until 68 A.D. Emperor Nero's reign would include severe persecution of Christians in 64 A.D. and the previous and future reigns of various Roman kings and rulers included oppressions and persecutions of both Jews and Christians. As believers live their lives out under various governmental systems which could be either oppressive or peaceful towards them, what should their attitudes be? This section of Scripture in Romans 13:1-7 is one of the principle areas in the Bible to discover the answer. As we compare this Scripture with the Scriptures of Daniel 4:17, Acts 5:29, 1 Timothy 2:1-4, Titus 3:1, and 1 Peter 2:13-17 along with the rest of Scripture, we can grow in our discernment of God's will as our lives are lived out in relationship to our government and governmental leaders.

- I. Believers are to be subject to their governing authorities and not resist them unless they are being forced to disobey God or His Word (Romans 13:1-2).
 - A. The word subject comes from the Greek word "hupotasso" which can also mean to place or rank under, to be submissive to, and to obey (verse 1).
 - B. Even though the word for "authorities" is the same Greek word which the Apostle Paul uses for angelic rulers in other Scriptures (Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 1:16), in Romans 13 it is definitely in the context of human government authorities (verse 1).
 - C. The reasons why believers should subject themselves and obey their government is because it has received its authority from God Himself and it has been instituted by God Himself. Therefore, the way the governing officials use their God-given authority will be judged and held accountable to God (verses 1-2; Daniel 4:17).
 1. The way that believers interact with their governing authorities will be judged by their governing authorities now as well as by God Himself at Christ's judgment seat (verse 2; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Peter 2:13-17).
 2. Believers are commanded to pray for their leaders especially in the areas of salvation, knowledge of the truth, correct discernment, and wise decisions with a thankful spirit (1 Timothy 2:1-4).
 3. Believers have resisted and disobeyed their governing leaders on a Scriptural basis if they are being asked to disobey God or His Word. However, they must be willing to place their lives in God's care and accept the consequences from the government for their actions (verse 2; Exodus 1:17-21; Joshua 2:1-7; Esther 4:12-16; Daniel 3:13-27, 6:10; Matthew 2:8-12; Acts 4:18-20, 5:27-29, 22:25; Revelation 13:5-10, 14:12-13).

THOUGHT: Are you seeking to live in a way which honors your governing leaders? Are you praying for them regularly according to 1 Timothy 2:1-4?

- II. Governments and governing authorities have been designed by God to approve and promote things that are good and to avenge and carry out God's wrath on wrong doing. This includes the ability to "bear the sword" which includes punishment, the fear of punishment, and the death penalty (Romans 13:3-4; Luke 21:24; Acts 12:2; Hebrews 11:34, 37; Revelation 13:10).

THOUGHT: Are there some tyrannical "governments" that are illegitimate governments that have neither promoted good nor protected their people from evil and wrong? Are there some governments that started out legitimate and shifted their stances in the areas of promoting good and protecting from evil to such a degree as to have become tyrannical and therefore need to be replaced by a new government? How does Romans 8:28, 12:19, and I Peter 2:18-23 help believers to have wisdom in these areas?

- III. God desires believers to be in subjection to their governing authorities for two main reasons:

- A. To avoid the punishment God has appointed governments to carry out against evil doers (in other words, don't become a casualty of the government and miss out on God's ultimate plan for your life), and 2) For the sake of conscience. Conscience literally means "with knowledge," and for the believer it is the inner knowledge that you are ultimately serving the Lord by being subjected to a government that isn't very close to His standards (verse 5; I Peter 2:13-19 -conscience is used in the Greek text of I Peter 2:19, instead of "mindful" of God it can be translated "because of conscience" of God).
- B. As believers are subject to their governing authorities, they show they are being subject to God by recognizing God as the One who has given them authority. Specifically, believers should be good stewards of God by paying to their governing authorities four things: 1) Taxes - taxes are levied on persons and property, 2) Revenue - revenue has to do with sales taxes and customs duties, 3) Respect - respect is the word meaning "fear" and recognizes God's power in placing a person in authority, and 4) Honor - honor is the word meaning "price" or "value" and, therefore, they are to be appreciated for their value to society.

THOUGHT: How will this lesson affect your attitude towards your local, state, and national governing authorities? Are there any areas in your life for repentance, personal growth, or being a light to others in this area?

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP INVOLVES PERSONAL HOLINESS AND LOVE IN OUR DAILY LIVES

ROMANS 13:8-14

The Apostle Paul has just informed us that we as believers owe taxes, revenue, respect, and honor to our government authorities (Romans 13:7). He now plays off of this “owing” idea for this upcoming section on Scripture. He explains to us that we “owe” this inner love which has become ours, through belief in the gospel of Christ and our justification, to be used for other people around us (Romans 13:8-10). He also explains by inference that we “owe” a life of personal holiness to our Lord Jesus Christ as we await His return to rule and reign with Him (Romans 13:11-14). May the Holy Spirit who now lives in every believer permanently and eternally give us grace and strength to be transformed in the areas of loving others and personal holiness.

- I. Believers “owe” to God, other people, and themselves lives which demonstrate the inner life of God’s love which is now in them to other people (Romans 13:8-10).
 - A. The word “owe” comes from the Greek root “opheilo” which means “to be indebted to” or “obligated to” and is usually used in the area of finances. However, the context of this verse is not a prohibition against financial debt but rather is a command for believers to pay all their debts and obligations to other people on time, and the most important obligation we have is to love them (verse 8a, 8b).
 1. The people of Israel were not prohibited against borrowing or lending to each other, however, they were prohibited against usury which is charging excessive interest on the loans (Exodus 22:25-27). The nation of Israel would lend to many nations (Deuteronomy 28:12). It was considered righteous to be generous with others and lend to others in a wise way through Scriptural principles (Psalm 37:21b; Matthew 5:42), however, it was wicked to borrow and not pay back (Psalm 37:21a).
 2. The love which believers are to “owe” to each other (same as one another in Romans 12:10-16) as well as everyone else (including their neighbors in Romans 13:9, 10) is the genuine love we have already discussed in Romans 12:9. Since God and His love now lives inside of His believers in Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5), then every believer now has the ability to demonstrate love (which I would define as perfectly combined patience, kindness, attitude, and action) to those around them.

THOUGHT: The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:1-2 for believers to be “imitators of God” and to “walk in love.” Read these verses and meditate on them and see how Christ’s life can motivate us to do this.

- B. We as believers now have the amazing ability to fulfill the law on a moment by moment basis as we live in the power of Christ’s love (verses 8c-10).

1. God has fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law (Mosaic) in us through our justification (past-tense salvation) in Christ (Matthew 5:17; Romans 3:19-24, 8:3). God now desires for His believers to walk according to the Holy Spirit in the area of His love (present-tense salvation, sanctification) so that we might fulfill His will (righteous requirement of the Law) for us (verse 8c; Romans 6:19-22; 7:22, 25; 8:4-6).
2. Genuine unhyprocritical love which flows from justified believers new inner natures through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit to those around us is the fulfilling of the Law (verses 9-10).
 - a. The lists of the ten commandments can be broken down into three or four “love of Yahweh God” laws and six or seven “love of neighbor” laws depending on where the Sabbath is placed (Exodus 20:3-17; Deuteronomy 5:7-21). Several Scriptures as well as Jesus Himself supported this view (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37-46; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27). The Apostle Paul here lists four of the “love of neighbor” laws which genuine Holy Spirit love can fulfill on a moment by moment basis as believers walk in love and live out their sanctification (verse 9; Romans 8:7-11).
 - b. The English word “neighbor” is the Greek word “plasion” and is defined as “the one who is near or close by.” Jesus further defined the word neighbor for us in His teaching on the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:27-37. The Apostle Paul tells us that when believers love their neighbors with this type of genuine love, no wrong can be done and the fulfilling of the law is accomplished through them (verse 10; Galatians 5:18, 22-23; Ephesians 5:8-10).
- II. Believers “owe” to God, other people, and themselves lives which demonstrate personal holiness in Christ as we await Christ’s return and our rule and reign with Him (Romans 13:11-14).
 - A. Believers are motivated to live out their current salvation and walk of love (present-tense salvation, sanctification, Romans 5:12-8:11) in light of the fact that this current world of sin and darkness is increasingly moving closer to the time of the kingdom of Christ’s righteousness and light. We as believers who are awaiting our future salvation (new resurrected bodies and reigning with Christ, Romans 8:12-39) should be motivated now to cast off the works of darkness (not live in our flesh) but rather put on the armor of light (the things of Christ’s Spirit and the truth of Scripture) (verses 11-12; 2 Corinthians 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11; 2 Peter 1:19).
 - B. Walking as “daytime” believers means living in light of our past, present, and future salvation (Romans 3:21-8:39) and the knowledge of Christ’s soon coming Millennial and New Earth Kingdoms (1 Thessalonians 5:4-11). When we do this, we “put on” the Lord Jesus Christ and the things of His Spirit and put off our flesh with its desires (verses 13-14; Ephesians 4:21-24, 5:7-21).

1. Many believers in the Roman world grew up involved in the “gods” of their culture with its orgies (Greek “komois” which can translate out as festal processions, excessive feasting, carousings, and revelries) and drunkenness.
2. Believers living for the things of the flesh rather than the Holy Spirit struggle with “sexual immorality” (Greek “koitais” which literally means “beds”) and sensuality (which is a general term for indecent conduct, debauchery, licentious desires, and violent activity).
3. Believers need to armor themselves with Christ’s righteousness and refuse quarreling (strife) and jealousy (envy).

THOUGHT: The Holy Spirit is teaching us as believers to commit more of ourselves to the efforts of loving others and personal holiness. This week seek to be transformed in these two areas as you go about your lives.

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP INVOLVES NEW COVENANT DISCERNMENT AND PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD

ROMANS 14:1-12

This passage begins a section in the book of Romans which goes from Romans 14:1-15:13 and is designed to teach us as believers how to properly interact with each other as fellow believers in Christ's Church as members of His body. This section is still part of the Practical Christianity section of the book of Romans which started in Romans 12:1 and continues on through the end of the book. Through this Practical Christianity section, the Apostle Paul has been teaching us how to live transformed lives through the inner renewal (renewal of our minds) of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. In this specific passage of Romans 14:1-12, the Apostle Paul is going to discuss two of the issues which the church at Rome struggled with in the areas of food and whether or not certain days were more holy than others or not.

- I. Believers need to learn how to welcome and accept each other's "weak in the faith" issues and "strong in faith" issues without despising each other or passing judgment on each other. In the areas of food and certain days, believers need to understand that they are to continue serving and living for the Lord even in their differences (Romans 14:1-9).
 - A. The Apostle Paul tells us that some believers are "weak in faith" and should be welcomed (eagerly received) by other believers without quarrelling over opinions (thoughts, reasonings, questionings) (verse 1).
 1. All believers come into the faith of Jesus Christ with a certain amount of baggage. Each believer has a conscience (Romans 13:5; 1 Timothy 3:9) which has been molded by a wide variety of influences including their family background, personality, previous teaching, life events as well as their obedience or disobedience to the truth (Romans 1:18-19; 1 Corinthians 8:7; 1 Timothy 4:2).
 2. According to the Apostle Paul, a believer can have a weak-faith conscience or a strong-faith conscience on any given subject depending on how closely he or she is aligned with the accurate Scriptural teaching on the subject. A "weak" believer is to be welcomed, loved, helped, and gently Biblically instructed (Romans 6:13, 14:1-15:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:14) and a "strong" believer is to be welcoming, loving, helping, and gently Biblically instructing (Romans 14:1-15:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14).
 - B. In the church at Rome, believers argued over whether to eat anything and everything or to eat only vegetables (verses 2-4).
 1. This probably had to do with a combination of Jewish dietary law practices, the way which Gentile Romans prepared food, and Roman pagan food sacrifices (verses 2-3; Leviticus 11:1-47; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 - especially verse 7).
 - a. Evidently the "strong" believers eating anything were having a tendency to despise (consider as nothing, treat with contempt) the abstaining believers (verse 3a).
 - b. Evidently the "weak" believers abstaining were having a tendency to pass judgment (in a condemning way) on the eating believers (verse 3b).

c. However, the Apostle Paul reasoned that since both "strong" and "weak" believers have individually already believed and been justified (declared righteous in God's sight and forgiven of their sins) that God has already welcomed (eagerly received) each one of them (verse 3c).

2. Paul's view is that we, as believers, are servants of Christ (who is the Master and Lord) and, therefore, need to be careful and gentle with each other (verse 4).

C. In the church at Rome, believers argued over whether certain days were more holy or important than others. This probably was a debate about Jewish feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths (verse 5; Galatians 4:10; Colossians 2:16-17).

D. Believers need to realize that we have the freedom to be fully convinced in our own minds and consciences in regards to special days and food. As long as we commit our lives to honoring Christ and giving thanks to God, we keep our walk with Christ's Spirit and Christ's resurrection life on track (verses 6-9; 1 Corinthians 10:23-33; 1 Timothy 4:4-5).

THOUGHT: When food observance, day observance, or anything else gets attached to any part of the salvation and gospel message of God's provided righteousness through Jesus Christ alone, then that is referred to as legalism. Anything changing the gospel message as found in Romans chapters 1 through 8 has a much more serious tone from the Apostle Paul (Galatians 4:8-11; Colossians 2:16-23) than areas dealing with "weak" faith and conscience.

II. All believers will stand before God's judgment seat which will be administered through Christ to give an account of how well we followed Christ for the purpose of reward (Romans 14:10-12).

A. Believers need to be careful not to confuse the Great White Throne Judgment with the judgment seat of Christ (also known as the Bema or believers judgment).

1. From a timing standpoint, the Great White Throne judgment for unbelievers is after Christ's Millennial reign on this earth (Revelation 20:11-15), before the destruction of this earth and universe (2 Peter 3:10-12; Revelation 21:1), and the New Heaven and New Earth (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-22:5).

2. From a timing standpoint, the judgment seat of Christ takes place before the Millennial reign of Christ for all those who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14, 11:17-18, 20:5-6). It is a believers judgment by Christ which tests our walk with Him which happened in our mortal bodies for the purpose of reward and our allotted assignments in His Millennial and New Earth Kingdoms (Daniel 12:13; Matthew 19:27-30; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; Revelation 11:17-18).

B. Believers are held accountable to God for things like condemning judgments and despising attitudes (same as Romans 14:3) toward other believers. However, there is hope and mercy available in 1 John 1:9 (verse 10; Matthew 5:23-24).

C. The Apostle Paul quotes the Greek Septuagint text of Isaiah 45:23 to prove from the Old Testament that judgment is assigned by God the Father to Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior (verses 11-12; John 5:22-23; Philippians 2:9-11).

THOUGHT: As believers interact with one another, their attitudes should lack tones of condemning judgment (Romans 14:3-4, 10, 13, 22) and should have tones that promote "peace and mutual upbuilding" (Romans 14:19). How is your tone?

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP INVOLVES WALKING IN LOVE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER IN AN UNDERSTANDING WAY

ROMANS 14:13-23

- I. Rather than passing judgment on one another, believers should be pursuing the things of the Kingdom of God which brings about peace and mutual upbuilding (Romans 14:13-19).
 - A. In regards to a weak faith-conscience or a strong faith-conscience, believers should not judge each other but rather judge themselves in the areas of "stumbling blocks" and "hindrances" (verse 13; Romans 14:3-4, 10).
 1. We should try to not be a stumbling block to each other. The Greek word "proskomma" translates out as "stumbling block" and is something which trips people up causing them to stumble or fall (1 Corinthians 8:9).
 2. We should try to not be a hindrance to each other. The Greek word "skandalon" translates out as "hindrance" and is the idea of putting a trap or snare in front of another believer (1 Corinthians 8:13 - the two times "stumble" is used in the English Standard Version is this word "skandalon").
 - B. Paul has been "persuaded in the Lord Jesus" that nothing is unclean ("koinon" - ritually impure) with regards to food or drink in itself (for the strong faith-conscience believer). However, if a believer thinks an item of food or drink is unclean (due to a weak faith-conscience), then it is for him or her (verses 14-16).
 1. Jesus consistently taught His disciples that "whatever goes into a person from the outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart, but his stomach, and is expelled." By saying this, the gospel writer Mark said that Jesus "declared all foods clean"(Mark 7:15-23). The Apostles Peter and Paul declared this same message in different places of Scripture (verse 14; Acts 10:9-16; 1 Timothy 4:4).
 2. Strong faith-conscience believers that are seeking to walk in love towards other believers have three characteristics (verses 15,-16).
 - a. They try to not grieve (cause sorrow or pain of mind or spirit) other believers (verse 15a).
 - b. They try to not destroy (ruin, cause loss) other believers. Since Paul is talking about the actions of justified believers whose eternal destination with Christ has already been settled (Romans 5:1, 8:33-39) and we are in the practical section of believers growing in sanctification (Romans 12:1-16:27), then the destruction would be in the area of a believer's individual sanctification and walk with Christ (verse 15b).
 - c. They try to walk in the integrity of their own conscience while at the same time balancing out the building up of their local church as part of Christ's body. In other words, if a strong faith-conscience believer knows something to be true and good and yet practices it in a way which causes other believers in the body of Christ to speak evil about it, then it doesn't bring good to him or her as the strong faith-conscience believer or the body of Christ (verse 16; 1 Corinthians 10:23-33; Colossians 2:16-19).

C. All believers are called to live their lives with the knowledge that they are now part of the eternal Kingdom of God with Christ ruling in heaven as they grow and mature in their faith primarily in the context of the Christian community. Along with this we all await our future promised co-reigning with Christ in His Millennial and New Earth Kingdoms (verses 17-19; Matthew 6:31-33; John 3:3-8; Romans 6:17-18, 8:9-25; 1 Thessalonians 2:12).

1. The Kingdom of God consists of the internally motivated aspects of living life in the Holy Spirit such as righteousness (our present salvation sanctification process, Romans 6:18- 23), peace, and joy (verse 17; Mark 7:15-23; Galatians 5:13-26).
2. When believers live their lives according to the Kingdom of God, they serve Christ, please God the Father, and are approved (show legitimacy and authenticity) by men (verse 18; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 5:7-10).
3. When believers live their lives according to the Kingdom of God, they look for ways to build other believers up which might include giving up an acceptable freedom for a specific event or time for the good of other believers (verse 19; Romans 15:1-2; 1 Corinthians 8:7-13).

THOUGHT: Look at 1 Corinthians 10:23-33 and see how the Apostle Paul lived out the thought he is expressing in these Scriptures.

- II. The Apostle Paul's three doctrinally reasoned but highly practical issues when it comes to food, drink, and the interactions with the body of Christ (Romans 14:20-23).
 - A. Every food and drink is clean in the sense that it is not ritually impure and cannot defile a person or their faith. However, it is a good practice, because of love, to abstain from certain foods or drinks around believers who have conscience sensitivities to those items so as not to cause them to stumble (verses 20, 21; 1 Corinthians 10:23-28).
 - B. When a believer decides food and drink issues on the basis of conscience and Scripture, then that is a decision between themselves and God. When a believer's conscience is clear before God on the matter, then he or she doesn't pass judgment on himself or herself and that should be counted as a great blessing (happiness, a privileged recipient of divine favor) (verse 22; 1 Corinthians 10:29-30).
 - C. Each believer needs to make individual decisions based on conscience and Scripture concerning food and drink issues and then live life according to that decision rather than doubt. Doubt and sin derail the Spirit led life. Scripture and the Holy Spirit can gradually transform our inner life, mind, and conscience over time (verse 23; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 10:31-32).

THOUGHT: What has Christian freedom and sensitivity to the consciences of other believers looked like in your life?

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP INVOLVES SERVING ONE ANOTHER AS CHRIST HAS SERVED US

ROMANS 15:1-13

- I. The example of Christ teaches us as His believers to live our lives for the purpose of glorifying God the Father. This will include bearing with and building up the weak, giving up our rights to please ourselves while accepting suffering from others, and studying as well as meditating on the Scriptures as our source of endurance, encouragement, and hope (Romans 15:1-7).
- A. The Apostle Paul encourages strong-faith conscious believers along with all believers to follow the example of Christ who lived His life with a higher purpose from God than just pleasing Himself (verses 1-3; Philippians 2:1-18).
 1. Strong-faith conscious believers have two main obligations in the body of Christ concerning weak-conscious believers (verse 1).
 - a. Strong-faith conscious believers are obligated to "bear with the failings of the weak." "Bear with" comes from the Greek word "bastazo" which can also be translated as take up, carry, endure, or remove. The idea is that in Christ's church, the strong are supposed to carry the burdens or failings of the weak (verse 1a; Galatians 6:1-5).
 - b. Strong-faith conscious believers are obligated to not please themselves in regards to the various decisions and interactions with weaker brothers and sisters in Christ (verse 1b; 1 Corinthians 8:11-13; 1 Corinthians 10:23-24, 31-11:1).
 2. All believers have two main obligations in the body of Christ as well as in the world as they live their lives out for Christ (verse 2).
 - a. All believers should try to please their neighbors (the ones who are near or close by) for their good. The idea is not to just be a pleasing person who can be driven by wrong motives and deceitfulness (see Ephesians 6:6, Colossians 3:22) but rather to please neighbors through the self-sacrificing love and goodness of Christ through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit (verse 2a).
 - b. All believers should live to "build up" (edify, encourage health and growth) their neighbors (verse 2b; Romans 13:8-10).
 3. Christ was and is the perfect example of a person who lived and lives not to please Himself. The Apostle Paul quotes Psalm 69:9 which was already explained in the book of John to be a Messianic (pertaining to Christ) Psalm when Christ cleansed the Jewish Temple in John 2:17. Christ as well as every believer who seeks to live life in Christ's way of self-sacrifice will suffer reproach and difficulty from those around them (verse 3; John 8:29; 2 Timothy 3:12).

THOUGHT: How can you better follow Christ's example of self-sacrifice and love this coming week? What specifically is the Holy Spirit encouraging you to do or not do differently for those around you and the Kingdom of God?

B. The power for all believers to live their lives by the example of Christ comes through studying and meditating on the Scriptures (verses 4-7; Psalm 119:105; Romans 6:17; 2 Timothy 3:15-17).

1. The instruction of the Old and New Testament Scriptures gives believers the ability to endure (persevere, the ability to "stay under" or continue through difficulties) because they are being regularly encouraged (comforted, from the Greek word "paraklaseos" which when used in its noun form was used by Jesus to describe the person and work of the Holy Spirit in John 14:26) and be assured of their hope (expectation, prospect) of Christ's return and future glory with Him (verse 4; Romans 8:18-25).
2. The God and Father we as believers in Jesus Christ have faith in has as two of His attributes (unchangeable characteristics) the very endurance and encouragement that have just been described in the previous verse. It is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit which now lives permanently in every believer (Romans 5:5, Ephesians 1:13-14) which gives us God's abilities through the renewing and transformation of our minds by the Scripture (verses 5-7; Romans 12:1-2).
 - a. It is only through God's power that we as believers can live in harmony (like-minded) with one another (verse 5) and together (Greek "homothumadon" which is the ideas of "one purpose" or "one impulse"), with one voice (mouth), glorify (praise or magnify God's splendor or attributes) God who is also the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (verses 5-6; John 20:17; Ephesians 1:3).
 - b. The Apostle Paul encourages all believers to welcome (richly receive, take in, pull into ones presence) one another in Christ since Christ has welcomed all of us believers through our faith for the Father's glory (verse 7; Romans 14:3).

THOUGHT: If you find yourself lacking in endurance, encouragement, or hope in your daily life as a believer, spend more time studying and meditating on the Scriptures (Romans 15:4; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2-3).

II. The example of Christ teaches us as His believers to live as servants to the will of the Father as found in the Scriptures. As we do this, we find that God fulfills His will through us and that His attribute of hope fills us with joy, peace, and the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:8-13).

A. The plan of God and the Scriptures prophesied the Christ (Messiah, Anointed One) as coming as a servant to the Jews (circumcised) and bringing about God's salvation to everyone who would believe from the Jews first to show God's truthfulness and His ability to perfectly do the things which He predicted ahead of time (verse 8; Genesis 12:1-3; 2 Samuel 7:7-17; Psalm 2:1-6; Isaiah 9:1-7, 12:6, 28:14-16, 48:12-22; Jeremiah 31:31-37; Matthew 10:5-6, 15:24; Romans 1:16, 9:4-5).

- B. The plan of God and Scriptures also prophesied that the very same salvation message of the Christ would be presented and believed among the Gentiles (nations) after being presented to the Jews and that the Gentiles would glorify God for His mercy. The Apostle Paul lists four passages which prophesied this amazing time of belief and acceptance of God's salvation among the Gentiles in what appears to be an increasing progression of hearing about Israel's God (2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49), being with Israel in worship (Deuteronomy 32:43), the call for the nations to praise Yahweh without necessarily being in Israel (Psalm 117:1), and the beginnings of Gentile believers with Christ during His Millennial and New Earth Kingdoms (Isaiah 11:10)(verses 9-12; Ephesians 2:19-3:6).
- C. Scripture and its fulfilled prophecies show God to be the "God of hope" (expectation, prospect) which explains the third attribute of God (besides endurance and encouragement from Romans 15:4-5). Paul's prayer for believers is that this "hope" attribute of God (which promises that the truth He has written in His Scriptures to be perfectly fulfilled) brings to them personal joy and peace as they believe and abundant (overflowing, profuse, more than enough) hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (verse 13; Romans 5:5).

THOUGHT: Take time this week to glorify God for the mercy He has shown you and continues to show you regarding the wonderful salvation that is yours through belief in Christ and His finished work on the cross.

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP INVOLVES FULFILLING MINISTRY, FAITHFULNESS TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, AND FINANCIAL GIVING

ROMANS 15:14-33

At the conclusion of Paul's letters to the churches, he takes time to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) to each church by assessing their walk with Christ and either encouraging or admonishing them. He also usually includes information on his and his team's current situation as well as his prayerfully considered future plans (see 1 Corinthians 16:1-13). These are the things he discusses for us here in this passage of Romans 15:14-33. Many times, if we are not careful, we can get to the end of the Apostle Paul's letters and miss out on the understanding that he is demonstrating for all believers the living out of sanctification and practical Christianity. We as disciples are also supposed to speak the truth in love to others around us, encourage, admonish, communicate current things as well as future goals, and ask prayer for our concerns.

- I. Paul praises Christ Jesus because of the great work being done among the Gentiles and his call to this work (Romans 15:14-22).
 - A. The church of Rome has been a good and growing church but now with this letter they should be even more equipped to instruct ("nouthetein" – counsel, admonish, warn) one another (verses 14-15).
 - B. Paul's calling was to serve as a priest of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles (verses 16-22).
 1. He proclaimed the gospel of God to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles after belief (justification) and discipleship (sanctification) became and continue to become an acceptable offering (verse 16; Romans 1-5; Romans 12:1; Isaiah 66:18-21).
 2. He gives all the glory to Christ Jesus for his ministry (verses 17-18).
 3. As an apostle, God gave Paul the ability to proclaim the Gospel through signs and miracles to areas where Christ was previously unknown (verses 19-22; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Isaiah 52:15).

THOUGHT: As a believer, do you know what spiritual gifts you have been given? Do you know what ministry area you have been called to?

- II. Paul lets the church at Rome know of his short range and long range plans (Romans 15:23-33).
 - A. Paul believed his work east of Rome had been pretty much completed in his first three missionary journeys (verse 23; Acts 13:1-20:3).
 - B. His future plan is to start proclaiming the Gospel west of Rome all the way to Spain and visit Rome on the way (verses 24a, 28c; Romans 1:11-15).
 - C. He currently was on his way to Jerusalem with an offering to the needy and poor Jewish believers from the Gentile churches (verses 24b-28b).

D. He knew of the dangers, asked prayer for safety, but sensed the leading of the Lord to go anyway (verses 29-33). As it turned out, the Lord had a plan to get Paul to Rome in a different way (Acts chapters 21-28).

1. Paul asks prayer for deliverance and protection from unbelievers (verse 31a – there was danger he was being warned about, Acts 20:22-24, 21:10-14).
2. Paul asks prayer that his offering from the Gentiles be acceptable (well-pleasing) to the Jewish believers (verse 31b; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4).

THOUGHT: Have you ever had the Lord change the way in which you thought you were supposed to go?

FINAL GREETINGS, WARNINGS, AND BLESSINGS

ROMANS 16:1-27

- I. Paul sends his greetings to some of the believers at the church at Rome. Paul greets 26 people by name in these verses (along with many more acquaintances) and a third of them are women (verses 1-16). Here are three highlights out of the list of people that can be Scripturally known (Romans 16:1-16).
 - A. Phoebe was a deaconess (diakonon) of a church at Cenchrea (seven miles from Corinth – where Paul wrote this letter). She probably was on her way to Rome and carried the letter (verses 1-2).
 - B. Prisca and Aquilla were Christians expelled from Rome during Emperor Claudius' reign (41- 54 AD) because Aquilla was Jewish (Acts 18:1-3). Paul worked alongside both of them in their same trade as tentmakers (makers of canopies and awnings) and they worked with Paul in the work of spreading the gospel during Paul's second missionary journey (51-54 AD) and possibly part of the third. Sometime after Emperor Claudius died in 54 AD, Prisca and Aquilla returned to Rome and began a church in their home (verses 3-5a).
 - C. Rufus (verse 13) was probably the son of Simon the Cyrene who was forced to carry the cross of Christ (Mark 15:21). It is believed that Mark's Gospel was written for the church in Rome and Rufus would have been known by all the believers there (Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11).

THOUGHT: As believers serving in Christ's Kingdom, we accomplish more together than separate. Hearing the stories of Phoebe the deaconess, Prisca and Aquilla the tentmakers, and Rufus the son of Christ's cross carrier should motivate us to increased fervency and faithfulness (Romans 13:11).

- II. Paul finishes the letter with a warning and a blessing (Romans 16:17-27).
 - A. After writing this full and rich doctrinal and practical letter to the church at Rome, the Apostle Paul warns them against destructive teachers and encourages them that God will use His power through the good teaching they have received to crush the Satanic teaching under their feet (verses 17-23, possibly 24).
 1. Believers need to watch out ("skopein" – observe, mark, scrutinize) for division causers and obstacle creators in regards to their teaching (verse 17a; Romans 1:16-20; 3:20-23; 4:4-5; 6:17; 15:4; Galatians 4:8-9; 5:1; Colossians 2:16-23; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 3:14-17).
 2. Believers need to learn to avoid (to come away from, to turn aside from) people who purposely teach untruths about Christ and Scripture because of self-centered motives or appetites (such as money, fame, pride, sex, etc.) usually through smooth talk (fair words) and flattery (praise, well-chosen but false words). The Apostle Paul does encourage instruction and warnings to false teachers while they are being watched out for and avoided especially by church teachers and elders (verses 17b-19; Acts 15:1-2; Romans 15:4, 14; 1 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9).

3. Through our knowing the truth in Scripture and applying it, God will exert His power to defeat Satanic teaching and protect the message of grace which we have received through Christ (verse 20; Genesis 3:15).
 4. Paul wants to let the believers know that several other believers are with him as he writes to the church of Rome from Corinth (probably at Acts 20:2). These included his fellow worker Timothy, his writer Tertius, Gaius, Erastus, and Quartus. Imagine the amount of personal teaching and discipleship that was given to each of these men as they were with the Apostle Paul while composing this letter of Romans (verses 21-23).
- B. Believers are made firm and stable through the Gospel which is the proclamation of Jesus Christ as delivered to us in the Scriptures. The mystery of the Gentiles and Jews being one body in Christ has now been revealed, and may the only God who is awesomely wise receive all the glory! (verses 25-27).