

## Romans 9:1-

### Introduction:

Perhaps in the original document, Paul started a new page, or left a large gap in the scroll between the last words of the previous chapter and the words that begin this one. Perhaps the change in thought was so pronounced, that without any outward indication they would understand as we do that he has finished his previous subject matter. There is no *for/gar* no *therefore/oun*, or any other tie back to what has been said before.

Though these words could stand alone the fact is that they are in the midst of a great treatise in which God has revealed that the gospel saves everyone who believes it upon the basis of their faith and trust(Rom 1:16-17; 3:21-26). To appreciate this salvation, Paul has openly described the anger and indignation God has always felt toward apostates and their wicked descendants(1:18-32), hypocrites(Jews & Gentiles) who know the law, and use it to condemn others but then practice the same things without repentance(2:1-29), and all those who were under the law but did not keep it(3:1-20). God still loved all these groups of mankind and wanted to save them. He sent his son to bring about the things necessary to justly offer man salvation by faith( 3:21-31).

Though all these groups have been offered the gospel, only those who are like Abraham and David will see its blessing and believe it(4:1-25). Behind the rebellion of mankind and salvation in Christ stand two men. Two men who now offer us the choice of our eternal destiny. Adam, who rebelled against God's rule, brought sin and death into the world, creating a tension and a battle between the fleshly and spiritual parts of our being(6-8).

All of this must be remembered for the following three chapters to make sense and their deep information to be properly interpreted in context. After all, it was only after all of this background was laid that these chapters were revealed. It would be foolish indeed to ignore what they have said when seeking to interpret these last three chapters which complete the doctrinal section of the book. Please ponder this brief summary of these chapters to capture the direction and theme:

*I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart for my brethren's sake. 9:1-2*  
*With all their blessings Israel has not obeyed God. 9:3-5*  
*God's word is not to be impugned for this. Not all Israel are of Israel. 9:6-13*  
*Does this reflect on God's righteousness May it never be. 9:14*  
*After all sinned, it was up to God to show mercy and he decides upon whom to confer it. 9:15-18*  
*Does this make God unfair? Who are we the clay to answer back to God? 9:19-21*  
*God has every right to use rebellious sinners to bring about his purposes and make known his mercy to the vessels of mercy. 9:22-23*  
*These vessels of mercy come from both Jews and Gentiles. 9:24-28*  
*Even Isaiah proclaimed that only the remnant would be saved . 9:29*  
*Gentiles found the righteousness of faith while Israel, entangled in the works of the law, stumbled at the stone of stumbling. 9:30-33*

*Paul prayed that they might be saved, but their ignorant zeal kept them from submitting to God's righteousness. 10:1-3*  
*Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth and lives in that faith, 10:4-11*  
*There is no distinction between Jew and Greek: the Lord is rich unto all who hear and call upon him: 10:12-17*  
*But not everyone has believed what they have all had the opportunity to hear. 10:18*  
*Even the jealousy God will provoke by calling the Gentiles has not had its intended effect yet. 10:19-21*

*Does this mean God has cast off his people may it never be. 11:1-3*  
*At this present time there is a righteous remnant 11:4-5*  
*This remnant is according to the election of grace and not of works. 11:6*  
*that which Israel sought for, he did not obtain but the election obtained it, the rest were hardened. 11:7*  
*God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this very day. 11:8-10*  
*Did God want them to fall? May it never be! God still hopes jealousy will drive them back. 11:11-12*

*Paul's preaching to the Gentiles held a hope that some in Israel would repent. 11:13-15*

*All that had occurred to the Jews is summed up as a breaking off of branches and Gentile branches being grafted in. 11:16-21*

*This should create a humility and fear in the hearts of all branches. No one is safe without faith and submission to God. 11:19-21*

*Look carefully at this. It reveals the goodness and severity of God. It reveals that God never changes but that our changes can bring either goodness or severity based not on the call, but on our faith and our deeds. 11:22-24*

*He then reveals a deep mystery: a hardening in part has befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved: 11: 25-28*

*Just as the Gentiles were cast off then reclaimed individually so also Israel will be cast off then reclaimed individually. 11:29-32*

*A doxology of praise and adoration for God's wisdom here. 11:33-36*

From all of this, it is clear that this is an explanation of how God worked through his covenant promises. When he made a promise to Abraham, it was conditioned on Abraham's obedience and specifically directed through Isaac. God was not bound by man's ideas or logic in all this. He had no obligation to Ishmael or the sons of Keturah, and no obligation to Esau though a twin son of Isaac. God's sovereign right to select the means by which he would work with fallen man is absolute. When the offspring of those given covenant promises are unfaithful, God has no obligation to bless them. Though the Jews claimed this was unfair, they are the clay. They have no means of passing such judgment upon God. The fact is that God operates on his own understanding of righteousness and not man's. His view of election is that he promises to bring blessings to the faithful and obedient through the seed. But this does not make all the seed eligible to receive the promise. Only those who are like Abraham will receive the blessings of Abraham. Mercy from God is not conferred from father to son like a birthright. It is granted upon the basis of faith and submission. Not all in Israel are really Israel.

Vessels of wrath and mercy make themselves such by their own conduct. God then decides how to use them based upon their faith or lack of faith. It was the Jews ignorant zeal that had led them to be used as vessels of wrath. They had heard the gospel and still refused to obey it. It is God's intent that by giving the blessings to the Gentiles these vessels of wrath will repent and become vessels of mercy.

But none of this means that God has cast off his people. He keeps his promises and is faithful. It has always been the righteous remnant that received the blessings and so it was then. Those with the righteousness of faith and submission were God's children just as they had always been and those who were rebellious and evil were not God's children just as they had never been. Just as God had cast off the Gentiles as a group but continued to call them back individually, so now he had cast off Israel as a group, but would call them back individually.

The use of the tree brings all this into perspective. We are all branches on this tree, broken off for unfaithfulness or grafted in for trusting submission. We have no basis for hope based upon others, but only upon our own effort and toil. This leads to fear and a realization that no one is safe unless they remain faithful. This is a general overview of the next three chapters. The details are far more complicated and occasionally very confusing. Our best course as we have take throughout the book to to remember Peter's own inspired counsel and be careful.

Perhaps we tire of hearing this, but never should. We must be cautious here. These things "are hard to be understood." The "ignorant and unstedfast" have in fact wrested them. We must "beware lest, being carried away by the wicked," we "fall from our own stedfastness."

There are some deeply perplexing issues regarding God's faithfulness in the midst of the gross unfaithfulness of man. He will now deal with them a little more deeply. If God is faithful how could the Jews have ended up in such a terrible plight? How could they have fallen so short with God to help them and the law to guide them? Why did they reject the Messiah, and take such an oppressive role in the proclamation of the gospel? Why were so few under the school master designed to bring them to Christ actually delivered to him?

This has to be dealt with because it is an objection to all that was said in the final verses of chapter eight. God had taken the Jews to be his people just as he was then taking Christians. That God was even then in the final stages of a complete rejection of them and that their land was to soon be taken from them even Jesus had revealed while on earth(Mt 24).

The Spirit used Paul to bring these facts to the Jews, but he also revealed Paul's own feelings. Paul made no personal observations about his own feelings in the first three chapters, but now speaks openly about them. There are two obvious reasons for him to do so. First, any Jew who reads this book, will find love and sympathy in Paul. Second, this will disarm the charge that Paul was simply renegade Jew who hated his people. Nothing could be further from the truth. Third, it gives us a human perspective of the direction of the thoughts. By seeing Paul's feelings, we can see what specific issues the Spirit is addressing here

### **1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit,**

To stress the validity of what he is about to say, in spite of all the natural inclinations and present circumstances, Paul offered four proofs. Why did the Holy Spirit do this? Paul was writing to Christians and had already established himself as an apostle(1:1-6) and therefore all that he wrote was inspired. That should be sufficient to establish its truth. Many in Israel would not read the entire book and would just quote this section. In mercy, the Spirit wanted this to stand on its own. These revelations will create a powerful reaction in some of Israel. The Spirit therefore removed any possibility that Paul was expressing his bitterness at those who had persecuted him, or any desire for vengeance in his heart.

The feelings of the Jews ran very high against Paul. They hated him and desired his death. They viewed him as a traitor against his people and a false teacher. All of this is abundantly testified in the book of Acts. His position as chief persecutor of the church in Acts 8 which scattered the entire church would have left him highly praised in the eyes of all the leaders and strong Jewish nationals.

*And Saul was consenting unto his death. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. . . 3 But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison. Acts 8:1-3*

His further attempt to go to other cities to destroy it there as well was also met with favor.

*But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Acts 9:1-2*

Of course, Christians knew Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, but the Jews in Damascus who saw him preaching in the streets must have been filled with amazement and wrath at the change. It must have appeared the height of hypocrisy and treason. Their true feelings were revealed when they sought to kill him.

*And when many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel together to kill him: 24 but their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates also day and night that they might kill him: 25 but his disciples took him by night, and let him down through the wall, lowering him in a basket. Acts 9:23-25*

When he returned to Jerusalem, he thought his previous relationship with the leaders would make him a valuable tool in the Lord's hand to convert some of them(Acts 22:18-21), but they too could only see in him the most contemptible of things. To them he was a traitor, a blasphemer and one who had turned his back on Moses to follow Jesus. They too sought to kill him.

*And it came to pass, that, when I had returned to Jerusalem, and while I prayed in the temple, I fell into a trance, 18 and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; because they will not receive of thee testimony concerning me. 19 And I said, Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 20 and when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him. Acts 22:17-20*

*And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, 29 preaching boldly in the name of the Lord: and he spake and disputed against the Grecian Jews; but they were seeking to kill him. 30 And when the brethren knew it, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. Acts 9:28-30*

What affect would this have had on a lesser man? What would happen to a man who in turning to Christ received the scorn, ridicule and open hatred and contempt of his people? But though that would be enough to poison some minds against the Jews, it was only the beginning. On his first missionary journey, in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium and Lystra, they continued to reveal their hatred and animosity.

*But the Jews urged on the devout women of honorable estate, and the chief men of the city, and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and cast them out of their borders. 51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. Acts 13:50-51*

*But the multitude of the city was divided; and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5 And when there was made an onset both of the Gentiles and of the Jews with their rulers, to treat them shamefully and to stone them, 6 they became aware of it, and fled unto the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the region round about: Acts 14:4-6*

*But there came Jews thither from Antioch and Iconium: and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul, and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. Acts 14:19*

They drove him out of Thessalonica before he had grounded the disciples, and did the same at Berea.

*But the Jews, being moved with jealousy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble, and gathering a crowd, set the city on an uproar; and assaulting the house of Jason, they sought to bring them forth to the people. 6 And when they found them not, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; 7 whom Jason hath received: and these all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, (one) Jesus. 8 And they troubled the multitude and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. . . 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was proclaimed of Paul at Berea also, they came thither likewise, stirring up and troubling the multitudes. Acts 17:5-9, 13*

In Corinth they attempted to take Paul into court to be tried. Later he summed it up to those in Corinth.

*But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment-seat, 13 saying, This man persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. 14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If indeed it were a matter of wrong or of wicked villany, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: Acts 18:12-14*

*Of the Jews five times received I forty (stripes) save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; 26 (in) journeyings often, (in) perils of rivers, (in) perils of robbers, (in) perils from (my) countrymen, (in) perils from the Gentiles, (in) perils in the city, (in) perils in the wilderness, (in) perils in the sea, (in) perils among false brethren; 2 Cor 11:24-26 24*

What could one expect from a man having endured this much animosity and trouble from his own people. How many could endure such insults and torment without becoming bitter and resentful, and turning his back against them. With all this clearly in mind, one can understand why Paul would want to strongly affirm the truth of what he is about to say. It would be impossible to believe in any but a Christian, and even among Christians, it is not often found. Paul has it, and he wants every one to know it.

### **1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit,**

A careful look at the above verse reveals five affirmations that Paul is telling the truth.

1. He affirms that he is telling the truth.
2. He states this truth with full knowledge of his relationship to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
3. He states that he is not lying.
4. He states that the scrutiny of his own conscience leaves him free of any guilt or sense of exaggeration.
5. He states that the Holy Spirit inspiring him also affirms it to be the truth.

Each of these would be enough to convince. All five together speak of an urgent need on Paul's part to be believed and a desire on the part of God that no one miss this point. An affirmation that he is telling the truth would be enough for all Christians. Yet he does not stop there, adding that he is speaking in Christ. When one enters Christ, Jesus becomes Lord and sovereign ruler. As King

of kings, and Lord of lords he will judge our words. Paul could not refer to his relationship unless he was verifying he spoke the truth.

Then he strongly affirms, I am not lying. I am not attempting to deceive or uttering anything false here. What I reveal about my feelings has nothing false. There are some things a man might press a little further than presently exists, hoping it will be true in the future, like a love he does not yet feel fully, but knows he will soon. Yet when pressed he would be more open and truthful. But when Paul says I speak the truth in Christ, he can't be stretching the truth even a little bit. He was in no way exaggerating or speaking of hopes for the future. Paul did not speak of what ought to be in the heart or of what he is working to gain. He spoke of what is really there and was not lying in any manner.

As such words as this are spoken or written a man's conscience begins to work on them and truly assess whether they are true or not. As these words come forth from Paul and his conscience fully evaluates them, his conscience affirms that they are true. There is not the slightest stirring anywhere in his heart of the possibility of their being untruthful. The words used here of the conscience bearing witness are identical with the ones Paul used when speaking of the Gentiles in 2:15. There is no part of his being, no area in his heart that denies the truth of what he is saying. There is no hidden animosity, no hidden resentment, no secret satisfaction with their lost state.

*"In the Holy Spirit"* may refer to his own inspiration, or could also refer to the Holy Spirit's help in allowing him to assess his own heart and know the validity of what he affirmed. Either way, it is simply another strong assertion that he is in no way being anything less than truthful here.

## **2. That I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart.**

Paul uses an adjective that adds intensity and degree to his emotions. It is a mighty, strong and intense sorrow. The term "sorrow" speaks of anxiety, pain and unhappiness arising over great disappointment or loss.

*"megas... great; 1. predicated a. of external form or sensible appearance of things(or persons); in particular, of space and its dimensions--... used of intensity and degree... of natural events powerfully affecting the senses, i.q. violent, mighty, strong..."* (Thayer, p. 394-395; 3173).

*"lupe, lupeo... "pain," "sorrow" (lupein, to cause pain," lupeisthai, "to experience sorrow" "to be sad"), ... lupe can mean physical pain as well as sorrow of spirit. Physically lupe can denote any pain, though esp. that caused by hunger or thirst by heat or cold... or by sickness... lupe is sorrow, pain or anxiety at misfortune or death, or anger at annoyances or hurts, esp. insults and outrages..."* (Kittel vol. 4 p 313; 3077)

Not only does he have great sorrow, but also has a pain that pierces and cuts filling his soul with great anguish, which is incessant and continual.

*"adialeiptos... unceasing(from a, negative, dia, through, leipo to leave) is used of incessant... continual..."* Vine V 1 p. 177)

*"odune... a. of "physical pain," ... esp. of severe sudden pains due to a wound or fracture, and felt as stabbing, piercing or cutting. ... The physical sensation then affects the soul and fills it with great anguish hence b. "mental distress," "grief" etc..."* (Kittel Vol 5 p 115)

This is an amazing insight into the soul of one of the most persecuted men who has ever lived. Ponder for a moment what these men we call apostles had to deal with from the Jews and from the Gentiles.

*For, I think, God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, both to angels and men. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye have glory, but we have dishonor. 11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; 12 and we toil, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13 being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now. 1 Cor 4:9-13*

This is the heart of the "agape" love which Jesus came to reveal.

*Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: 44 but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; 45 that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. 46 For if ye love*

*them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more (than others?) do not even the Gentiles the same? 48 Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Mt 5:43-48*

These people had heard the truth and rejected it. They had sought to kill and destroy him in all the ways listed in the introduction. They hindered the truth and often drove Paul from the disciples he loved and who still needed him. Yet Paul felt no animosity or bitterness. He feels no desire for God to take vengeance or to destroy them. Paul actually feels pity and great sorrow for them. His compassion and mercy which mirrors God, he feels the pangs of great sorrow that they cannot be made to see the truth and repent. Like God, Paul wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4). With all these terms Paul is seeking to manifest the great intensity of what occurs in his heart when he considers the fate and condition of his people.

### **3 For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ**

With a *for/gar* Paul gives the reason or cause for the previous statement which will help us to better understand it. He actually has such strong feelings for them and feels so much pain at their present state that he could wish himself anathema from Christ if it would help them. The term “wish” is sometimes translated prayer and may imply that this is the direction that the wish travels.

*"euchomai... 1. to pray to God... for one 2. to wish..."* (Thayer, p. 264; 2172)

Paul feels so strongly about this and his sorrow is so great that wishes and maybe even prays that he could become “anathema” from Christ if it would help them.

*"anathema... 1. Prop. a thing set up or laid by in order to be kept; spec. a votive offering which after being consecrated to a god was hung upon the walls or columns of his temple.. 2. A thing devoted to God without hope of being redeemed, and, if an animal, to be slain [Lev 27:28,29] therefore a person or thing doomed to destruction, Josh 6:17; 7:12, ... a thing abominable and detestable, an accursed thing, Deut 7:26. Hence in the NT anathema denotes a. a curse... b. a man accursed, devoted to the direst woes... Gal 1:8... I Cor 15:22; Rom 9:3 doomed and so separated from Christ)..."* (Thayer p. 37; 331)

This is a powerful word with a powerful history. It is used in the Law of Moses for those things that have been determined by God to be destroyed. Jericho was *anathema* and therefore had to be destroyed. When Achan took something he and his entire family also became *anathema*. Now Paul willingly out of love would take this curse upon himself if it would bring about the conversion of those who were lost. As one reads this, they are reminded of the words in verse one and now their need becomes more obvious. This is not an exaggeration. It is the absolute truth. Paul has so much evangelistic zeal to bring salvation to those who would otherwise spend eternity in hell that he was willing to take their place if it would have made any difference. The next time we are persecuted and mistreated by those we are trying to save, it would be exceedingly wise for us to remember these words before we decide how we will respond. It is no more than Jesus himself felt when he left heaven and came to earth to seek and save the lost by become a curse for us.

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: Gal 3:13*

### **for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh:**

After all that had occurred as we noted above, Paul had not yet cast off his feelings of brotherly love toward them. He had his new Christian brethren who could in all ways replace them, but still Paul cared about these people. They were still and would continue to be to the end of his live his brethren. Nothing they could do to hurt him would ever take from him this concern and care. It was “for” them that he was willing to be *anathema from Christ*.

*"huper... 2. i. q. Lat. pro, for, l. e. for one's safety, for one's advantage or benefit, (one who does a thing for another, is conceived of as standing or bending 'over' the one whom he would shield or defend...)... to be for one i.e. to be on one's side, to favor and further one's cause... after the idea of suffering, dying, giving up life, etc.:...of Christ dying to procure salvation for his own,... of Christ undergoing death for man's salvation,... of God giving up his Son... Since what is done for one's advantage frequently cannot be done without acting in his stead... we easily understand how huper, like the Lat. pro and our for, comes to signify 3. in the place of, instead of... Since anything whether of an active or passive character which is undertaken on behalf of a person or thing is undertaken 'on account of' that person or thing, huper is used..."* (Thayer, p. 638-640; 5228)

As one reads and ponders this definition one can easily see the congruity between what God and Jesus did for man and what Paul was wanting to do. For their behalf and in their interests he was willing to take their place.

Yet, all of his love, and even all the love of God could not change what they had made of themselves. With all of God's lavish, loving, blessings which he is about to elaborate upon, they had rejected all of God's calls. They had rejected the law, the prophets, his son, and the apostles who had gone out from city to city to give them the first opportunity of becoming true sons of God. This they had not only rejected, but also had hindered others from receiving. Paul was not bitter against them. Nor is he now writing this information to hurt or malign them. He continues as does God to love them. Yet their time was running out. It is 58 AD now. In 12 years a destruction will come upon them and wipe many out of existence.

Paul now has some things to reveal about the Jewish nation that are important for God's children to ponder. In some respects this chapter follows the same kind of path as the tenth chapter of the First Corinthian letter. The Jews had been given some wonderful opportunities by God. They had squandered them. Paul's warning in Romans is that though they were all baptized to Moses, God was not well pleased with them and overthrew them in the wilderness. His conclusion there is "let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. By the time we are finished with this section, Paul will be saying much the same thing to the Gentiles in Rome.

#### **4 who are Israelites;**

He begins by categorizing the blessings and privileges God had given to them to help them and which they had refused to use in an honorable way. This designation was given to Jacob by an angel after he had wrestled with him and prevailed.

*And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. 25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. 26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. 27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. 28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed. 29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. Gen 32:24-29*

From that day forward the descendants of Jacob were also called by this name.

*And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. 10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel. 11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; 12 and the land which I gave unto Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. Gen 35:9-12*

The basic idea behind the term is of people willing to push themselves as far as God wanted them to be pushed and would not give up. Jacob wrestled all night with the angel hoping for a blessing. When the angel did not prevail when pushing him to the limits of his endurance, he asked Jacob to let him go. Jacob refused to let go until he was given a blessing. His name was changed because he prevailed with God. The idea therefore seems to center on the desire to be blessed by God and to suffer whatever is necessary to prevail.

#### **whose is the adoption, and the glory,**

God had adopted the Israelites. He had called Abraham out of Ur and offered to make him a great nation. When he came to redeem Israel out of Egypt, he told Pharaoh that Israel was his son, for he had taken them as his own people.

*And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith Jehovah, Israel is my son, my first-born: 23 and I have said unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me; and thou hast refused to let him go: behold, I will slay thy son, thy first-born. Exod 4:22-23*

*For thou art a holy people unto Jehovah thy God: Jehovah thy God hath chosen thee to be a people for his own possession, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth. 7 Jehovah did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all peoples: 8 but because Jehovah loveth you, and because he would keep the oath which he swore unto your fathers, hath*

*Jehovah brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Deut 7:6-8*

The potential here was limitless. God had adopted them to become his children and offered them great blessings. These blessings offered them great glory.

*And it shall come to pass, because ye hearken to these ordinances, and keep and do them, that Jehovah thy God will keep with thee the covenant and the lovingkindness which he swore unto thy fathers: 13 and he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee; he will also bless the fruit of thy body and the fruit of thy ground, thy grain and thy new wine and thine oil, the increase of thy cattle and the young of thy flock, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee. 14 Thou shalt be blessed above all peoples: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. 15 And Jehovah will take away from thee all sickness; and none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, will he put upon thee, but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. Deut 7:12-15*

The glory of the nation under David and Solomon, was nothing compared to what God could have done for them if they had continued to be faithful.

### **and the covenants,**

Beginning with Abraham, God made a series of covenants with the people. Abraham's first covenant was in Gen 12:1-3 wherein he was offered the right to be God's means of blessing all the families of the earth as well as receiving a wonderful land for his offspring to dwell in. He was later given the covenant of circumcision. As time passed, there was the covenant on Mount Sinai.

### **and the giving of the law,**

It was only to Israel that God gave the Law of Moses. He later told them what a blessing this was.

*if thou shalt obey the voice of Jehovah thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law; if thou turn unto Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. 11 For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? 14 But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. Deut 30:10-14*

It was such a blessing for them to have this law.

### **and the service (of God),**

God had given them all the instructions regarding worship. The Hebrew writer tells us that God was actually revealing to them heavenly things (Hebrews 8). That they possess the instructions regarding the proper means of worshiping and honoring him was a wonderful blessing and honor.

### **and the promises;**

Every promise God ever gave beginning in Gen 12:1-3 and continuing through the giving of the law were given only to Israel. God had given up the Gentiles and was working through Israel. Even the promises that were offered to the Gentiles were given first to the Jews. God had made so many wonderful conditional promises to the Jews, and while they were faithful, God fulfilled them. When they were unfaithful God fulfilled curses instead of promises.

### **5 whose are the fathers,**

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah. By far the vast majority of great men found in the Old Testament were members of the Jewish nation. They were trained under the great covenants and laws of God and consequently were prepared to offer service to God. They had a wonderful history of patriots and God fearing people. Just look at Hebrews 11.

### **and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh,**

This was the greatest honor God bestowed upon the nation of Israel. It completely dwarfs all the other aspects of the promise in Gen 12. What is land and a great nation when compared to becoming the means through which all the nations of the earth would be blessed? All the godly through all the ages had awaited this great event with anticipation. God chose Israel and gave him

the honor of bringing in the Messiah.

The term “as concerning the flesh” has a very similar construction to what he said at the beginning of the book.

*concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, Rom 1:3*

Only Jesus fleshly nature came from Israel and from David. The body God prepared for the already living Word was described clearly in Hebrews.

*Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, But a body didst thou prepare for me; Heb 10:5*

*1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. . . . 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. John 1:1-2, 14*

Before coming into the world he was the Word who was in the beginning with God and who was God. When the word became flesh, only the flesh was of the seed of David and Israel. The Spirit always makes great efforts to be certain this is understood. Israel was given the honor of being the nation where the Christ would come and do his work.

*But he answered and said, I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matt 15:24*

**who is over all,**

Paul cannot even speak the name without giving great honor to Jesus. The Christ is in absolute total control over all (pas - every class and kind) the universe. Nothing has been left unsubjected to him except the Father.

*For, He put all things in subjection under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put in subjection, it is evident that he is excepted who did subject all things unto him. 28 And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all. 1 Cor 15:27-28*

God has highly exalted Jesus Christ because of the sacrifice he made for mankind.

*Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; 10 that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of (things) in heaven and (things) on earth and (things) under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2:9-11*

**God blessed for ever. Amen.**

Though the Jews considered Jesus to be a blasphemer and therefore hung him upon a tree, God considered Jesus to be blessed and honored forever.

*Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; 10 that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of (things) in heaven and (things) on earth and (things) under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2:9-11*

**6 But**

The “but” warns us that a change in direction is now occurring. All of the wonderful promises, blessings and honor given to Israel did not change Paul’s sorrow and pain over the circumstances that existed at that time. In spite of all the God had done for them, and even with Paul’s wish that he could do more, the sad reality was that they had rejected and killed their Messiah and were even then spurning all God’s efforts to get them to repent. The adversative and disjunctive “but” brings us back to this reality.

*“de... a particle adversative, distinctive, disjunctive, but, moreover... It is used 1. univ. by way of opposition and distinction; it is added to statements opp. to a preceding statement...” (Thayer, p. 126; 1161)*

What Jesus found when he came and what Paul had to deal with after they had crucified Jesus was completely out of harmony with what the promises God had made to them should have led to. What was the problem? Why was there such a contrast between what God had promised and the reality which then broke Paul’s heart? Why didn’t the promises bring about a different set of circumstances where there was congruity and equality?

This ought to be an important consideration to all God's people. For we are in exactly the same set of circumstances as these Jews. We now have promises and a life to live just as they did. It was not the promises that failed them, but they who failed and fell short of the promises. Since they failed, so also could we! First and foremost then, we must see that the word of God did not fail. There was no lack on God's part that brought this about.

**(it is) not as though the word of God hath come to nought.**

The realities of Israel's present state do not reflect on the word of God. It is not "as though" the word of God has come to nought. This is not the "reason" why things are as they are. They are not the "ground" for Paul's feelings of sorrow and pain.

*"hoti... II the reason why anything is said to be or to be done, because, since, for that, for, (a causal conjunct. ...)... a. it is added to a speaker's words to show what ground he gives for his opinion;... b. hoti makes reference to some word or words that precede or immediately follow it..." (Thayer p 458-460; 3754)*

The present state of Israel that brought such great sorrow and pain to Paul have absolutely nothing to do with the word of God. They do not cast any reflection upon its power or its veracity. The rebellion of the Jews which Jesus and Paul faced did not mean that God's word had "come to nought."

*"ekpipto... to fall out of, to fall down from... 1. properly... to fall off... 2. metaph. a. ... to fall from a thing, to lose it... b. absol. to perish; to fail, (properly to fall from a place which one cannot keep, fall from its position)... to fall powerless, fall to the ground, be without effect..." (Thayer p 198; 1601)*

Nothing had returned back void of all the God had spoken. It is impossible for God's words and promises to fall powerless to the ground and be without effect.

*For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 11 so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. Isa 55:10-11*

God's word had done exactly what he desired and wanted. Once again it was man's freewill that was reflected upon not God's promises. In this respect it is exactly like the garden of Eden. God made wonderful promises to them about dominion and subduing, and tending the garden of Eden. But he also warned them if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would die. After they ate of the tree, they no longer had full dominion, and they were no longer tending the garden. Did the word of God come to nought simply because those promises were not fulfilled? Of course not! God had a promise if they kept his word and a curse if they rebelled. Either way his word was fulfilled and fully established. It was still their choice. This is what is being stated here again. Though God had wanted all the people who were born to Israel to receive these blessings, he had made it very clear when he gave the law on Mt Sinai that the covenant was to be conditional, based entirely upon each person who would or would not submit to it. Once again as in the garden he gave blessings and curses. Blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience because the choice was theirs whether to be blessed or cursed. With a *for/gar* Paul will begin to elaborate on this.

**For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel:**

This is the great key to the mystery of the Israelites. All questions and doubts about God's faithfulness and about God's fully keeping his promises are answered here. Not all deserve the title of "Israel" as one who prevails with God. All were "of" Israel, but that did not make them necessarily "Israel."

*"ek... It denotes as well exit or emission out of, as separation from, something with which there has been close connection;... II of the ORIGIN, SOURCE, CAUSE; 1 of generation, birth, race, lineage, nativity; a. after verbs of begetting, being born etc..." (Thayer, p. 189; 1537)*

The Spirit plainly states there is nothing about a direct blood-tie from father to son or daughter to Israel that made one a true Israelite. This is not a new point for this book. In the second chapter the Spirit made it very clear that both the covenant of circumcision and being a Jew conveyed no special favor with God. It only made it possible for them to become servants.

*For circumcision indeed profiteth, if thou be a doer of the law: but if thou be a transgressor of the law, thy circumcision is become uncircumcision. 26 If therefore the uncircumcision keep the ordinances of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision? 27 and shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who with the letter and circumcision art a transgressor of the law? 28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. Rom 2:25-29*

The term "Israel" as noted above was a special designation chosen by God to describe his people. Anyone could be born to Israel. Even Esau was born to Israel, but was not of Israel (more on this later). His point is clear. The promises made to Israel were conditional promises. The first condition was that they were born with the blood of Jacob (Israel) in their veins. But this was not the only condition. Another condition to be Israel was that one trusted in God and obeyed him. This was the problem and the reason for Paul's unceasing pain and great sorrow.

### **7 neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children:**

The Spirit uses a similar disjunctive conjunction to the one above to continue the fact that the word of God had not come to nought.

*"oude... a neg. disjunctive conjunction, compounded of ou and de, and therefore prop. l. q. but not; generally, however its oppositive force being lost, it serves to continue a negation. 1. And not, continuing a negation... 2. Also not [A.V. generally neither]... 3. not even..." (Thayer, p. 461; 3761)*

This point is a simple yet powerful historical fact. Not all the physical offspring of Abraham were children of promise. The promised seed given to Abraham by God in Gen 12 was fulfilled in God's way. Abram and Sarai helped it along, but it failed. Just because a man was of Abraham's seed did not itself alone create a child of promise. Both John the Baptist and Jesus testified to the Jews about this very fact in their own ministries.

*But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said unto them, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance: 9 and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 10 And even now the axe lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Mt 3:7-10*

*They answered and said unto him, Our father is Abraham. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I heard from God: this did not Abraham. 41 Ye do the works of your father. They said unto him, We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, (even) God. 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? (Even) because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of (your) father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. 45 But because I say the truth, ye believe me not. 46 Which of you convicteth me of sin? If I say truth, why do ye not believe me? 47 He that is of God heareth the words of God: for this cause ye hear (them) not, because ye are not of God. John 8:39-47*

To be a true child of Abraham took a spiritual and character likeness to Abraham added to the physical lineage. Physical lineage alone did not bring God's favor. True children of Abraham were those who acted like Abraham.

### **but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.**

A slightly stronger adversative particle reveals the truth that everyone already knows.

*"alla... an adversative particle... hence properly, other things sc. than those just mentioned. I But. So related to the preceding words that it serves to introduce 1. an opposition to concessions; nevertheless, notwithstanding:... 2. an objection... 3. an exception... 4. a restriction... 5. an ascensive transition or gradation, nay rather, yea moreover..." (Thayer, p. 27-28; 235)*

Abraham had many children. First, he had Ishmael, then after the death of Sarah through Keturah he had six more sons. But only Isaac was the seed of Abraham found in Genesis 12 and repeated here in Romans.

*And Hagar bare Abram a son. And Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bare, Ishmael. 16 And Abram*

was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram. Gen 16:15-16

And Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah. 2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah... 5 And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. 6 But unto the sons of the concubines, that Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts. And he sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country. Gen 25:1-2, 5-6

Even Abraham understood that the promise God had given to him was only to be fulfilled by Isaac. The rest of his children did not have this blessing. Though Abraham was their father, that was as far as it went. None of the promises God had made to Abraham in Genesis 12 were to be conferred to his other children. Only Isaac was to be used to bring in the covenant promise and be the “called” seed.

*"kaleo... to call... a. to call aloud, utter in a loud voice... with gen of place, l. q. to call out, call forth from metaph. to cause to pass from one state into another... b. to invite... (... everywhere in the N. T. Epp. only those who are spoken of as called by God who have listened to his voice addressed to them in the gospel, hence those who have enlisted in the service of Christ..."* (Thayer, p. 321-322; 2564)

## **8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God;**

The point of all the above is now fully explained. The word of God could not have come to nought because the promises were never intended for those who were only children of the flesh. The expressions *“not all who are of Israel are Israel”* and *“neither, because they are Abraham’s seed, are they all children but in Isaac shall thy seed be called”* are now focused on this one point. Children of the flesh are the physical descendants of Abraham and Israel, but without any word of promise from God that he has chosen them to be his children. Once again, God makes it clear that only he can give the necessary standards for becoming one of his children. One is not “child of God” simply because they are a descendant of a child of God. Only God can select the criteria which will make one his child. The arbitrary ones made by the Jews were completely false.

## **but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed.**

Another *alla* again stresses the truth. Not children of the flesh **but** children of the promise are reckoned for a seed. It should not be overlooked that the same term that was to describe how God used Abraham’s faith to reckon him righteous (Rom 4:3-24) is now used to describe how he reckons a seed.

*“logizomai... 1... to reckon, count, compute, calculate, count over; hence a. to take into account, to make account of... 2... to reckon inwardly, count up or weigh the reasons, to deliberate,... 3. by reckoning up all the reasons to gather or infer; i.e. a. to consider, take account, weigh, meditate on... b. To suppose, deem judge... c. To determine, purpose, decide...”* (Thayer, p. 379; 3049)

It is up to God to make this *“calculation”* and *“reckon.”* He has *“determined,” “purposed”* or *“decided”* that only the children of the promise will be *“considered”* a seed. The *alla/but* contrasts this simple yet profound difference. God promised that only through Sarah would he bring forth a son to Abraham that would bring all the promises into being. Though Ishmael was a son, he was not a child of promise. God was under no obligation to change his plans simply because Abraham presented a different option to him. Paul’s discussion of this same concept in Galatians throws enough additional light on his thinking here to make it worth reading.

*For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, one by the handmaid, and one by the freewoman. 23 Howbeit the (son) by the handmaid is born after the flesh; but the (son) by the freewoman (is born) through promise. 24 Which things contain an allegory: for these (women) are two covenants; one from mount Sinai, bearing children unto bondage, which is Hagar. 25 Now this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia and answereth to the Jerusalem that now is: for she is in bondage with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother. 27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; Break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: For more are the children of the desolate than of her that hath the husband. 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him (that was born) after the Spirit, so also it is now. 30 Howbeit what saith the scripture? Cast out the handmaid and her son: for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman. 31 Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a handmaid, but of the freewoman. Gal 4:22-31*

Only a promise from God made Isaac different from Ishmael, hence the key to being a genuine child of God centers right on that point. God must initiate the means by which someone becomes

his child. We must not forget the entire point of the book. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. Only through God's grace and mercy can forgiveness and adoption be secured by sinners. This has never been offered to anyone based upon a fleshly relationship to a parent. Not even our relationship to Adam had this affect! All died because all sinned(Rom 5:12)!!! We must grasp God's consistency here. His righteousness demands that the soul that sins will die, and that the soul that believes and trusts shall live.

*1 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. . . . 20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. Ezek 18:1,20*

*For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith. Rom 1:17*

*Now that no man is justified by the law before God, is evident: for, The righteous shall live by faith; Gal 3:11*

*But my righteous one shall live by faith: And if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. Heb 10:38*

This was true during the age of the patriarchs(Hebrews 11), It was true under the law of Moses(Pr 3:5-7) and it is true today. This has always been God's promise. Just as Isaac was the seed of Abraham because God promised that this would be the case, so also in that day and age, only those Jews who were children of promise like Isaac and not children of the flesh like Ishmael were the children of God.

That this is the gist of Paul's argument here is proven by the context. He revealed in very first verse that he felt pain and sorrow over the Jewish rejection of the Messiah and the gospel(cf Rom 10:1-3). He then showed that this rejection did not reflect on God's word, because not all Israel was of Israel and not all of Abraham were the promised seed. The purpose of this section is to prove that "not all Israel is of Israel" and therefore God's word has accomplished exactly what he wanted. This point then is exactly the same one Paul was making in Galatians quoted above. Everyone who rejects God's offer of sonship through faith is just a child of the flesh. Everyone who accepts is a child of promise.

It ought to be obvious that when God makes a promise and people fulfill the promise then they are the children of promise. God made a promise to Abraham, and because he fulfilled that promise, God gave him Isaac. It was God who determined ("reckoned")who and by what criteria the promised seed would come. This principle remains consistent through to the very end.

**9 For this is a word of promise, According to this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.**

As was pointed out back in Chapter Four, God had waited until Abraham was 99 and Sarah 90 when these words were spoken. Sarah's womb was dead and the time was past for children, but God gave a word of promise.

*And without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb; 20 yet, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 22 Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Rom 4:19-22*

The promise Abraham looked at and did not waver over was that when that season came round again Sarah would have a son. It was that son and only that son who was the child of promise. His children through Hagar and Keturah were not children of promise, just fleshly children of Abraham. This is the crucial point! It happens over and over again throughout all the rest of the generations of God's people. Many children will be born, but only those God identifies as the children of promise will be children of God.

If the children of the flesh had any right to be the seed of Abraham, then Ishmael was the legitimate first born son of Abraham and consequently would have had to be the one through whom the promise came. God however is not bound by what men do, think or say. God knew when he gave the promise how he would fulfill it. What we read in the Scriptures is exactly how God went about

fulfilling the promise.

### **10 And not only so; but Rebecca also having conceived by one, (even) by our father Isaac--**

With both *de* and *alla* as adversative particles, he now literally says “*not only but(de) but(alla) and(kai)*.” This seems to be Paul’s way of emphasizing just how startling this next example is. These were twins! They had the same mother and the same father and were born at the same time! If being a physical descendant had any real power or influence upon God, then it should have shown up here. At the very least these two boys should have been given an equal portion of the promise(as Jacob’s twelve sons did), though really since Esau was the firstborn and Isaac’s favorite, the blessing ought to have been his.

### **11 for (the children) being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand,**

The *gar/for* gives the reason and purpose for the previous statement. This is why he brought it up. The children were not even born when these decisions were made. Rebecca was concerned because of the violence of what was occurring in her womb so she went to inquire of Jehovah about it.

*And the children struggled together within her. And she said, If it be so, wherefore do I live? And she went to inquire of Jehovah. 23 And Jehovah said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, And two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels. And the one people shall be stronger than the other people. And the elder shall serve the younger. Gen 25:22-23*

Paul is here giving an inspired commentary on the real meaning of this statement. Jacob and Esau were not even born. They were still in the womb. They had not had any opportunity to do anything good or evil to influence God’s decision. The Spirit states “that” God had a specific purpose and intent for doing it this way.

*“hina... I. An adverb of place,... a. where; in what place. b. in what place; whither... II a final conjunction(for from local direction, indicated by the adverb, the transition was easy to mental direction or intention)denoting purpose and end: to the intent that; to the end that, in order that;... it is used 1. prop of the purpose or end;...” (Thayer, p. 302-304; 2443)*

The “*purpose*” of “*end*” of this act, and his “*intent*” in doing it in this manner was to show that his “*purpose*” would stand according to election. This term was introduced in 8:28 to describe those of us who were called according to God’s purpose. It is used here and three other times in the NT(Eph 1:11; 3:10-11 II Tim 1:9) to describe both God’s overall eternal purpose for the physical creation as well as for individual circumstances where his intent or plans he intends to accomplish are revealed. God wanted it made clear to those living under the new covenant that the reason he chose Jacob over Esau is that his purpose is “according to” election. This is the term “*kata*” which is used to describe proportion and equality. Like the balances on each side of the scale must be equally proportioned, so God’s purpose is equally proportioned to his “election.”

*“ekloge... election, choice... a. the act of picking out, choosing... b. the thing or person chosen...” (Thayer, p. 197; 1589)*

God’s choice of Jacob over Esau was made by God to works or character to establish his right to use election as the basis of bringing about his purpose. God has the sovereign ability to pick out or choose who he will work with based on his own desires. His decision to bring the seed and the nation through Jacob and not through Esau was based upon his desire to make this point “stand.”

*“meno... to remain, abide; ... I. intransitively; in reference 2. to TIME; to continue to be, i.e. not to perish, to last, to endure: of persons, to survive, live... of things, not to perish, to last, stand...of purposes, moral excellences,.. Heb 13:1...” (Thayer, p. 399; 3306)*

Through this reality, God’s sovereign right to choose will “remain” and “abide.” There is no way around it, and it is not difficult to understand. God chose Jacob and rejected Esau. Jacob became Israel and Esau became Edom. Though Isaac was the father of both, God made a decision to use the one and not to use the other. Be careful here! He is not speaking of salvation. Both men could be saved or lost based upon their conduct and faith. But regardless of their conduct or their faith, Jacob was going to become Israel and bring the Christ into being and Esau was not.

## **not of works, but of him that calleth,**

The Spirit also wants it clearly understood that God did not use the works of these men. It could have been successfully argued that though they had not done anything good or bad yet, with foreknowledge God still knew what they would do and chose the best man. This verse denies that. He did not use works.

*“ergon... 1. business, employment, that with which anyone is occupied... 2. any product whatever, any thing accomplished by hand, art, industry, mind... 3. an act, deed, thing done: ...” (Thayer, p. 248; 2041)*

He did not look into the future and that which each man would accomplish and then choose based upon their merit. He did not want his purpose by election to stand on that basis. He wanted it to stand instead on the basis of “him that calleth.” God wants our focus to be upon him, not upon ourselves. It is our trust in him that is the basis of his purpose and not any trust in our lineage or our abilities and accomplishments. This fits so well with the theme of salvation by faith apart from works. Hence this very section is another proof that this is God’s intent. Man must learn to look to God for everything. He cannot direct his own steps, cannot determine what God wants him to do, cannot determine how to be one of his children. Truly, of him through him and to him are all things (Rom 11:33-36)

## **12 it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.**

When one goes back to read that passage one sees immediately that it is not the individual, but the nations they represented that were being discussed.

*And Jehovah said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, And two peoples shall be separated from thy bowels. And the one people shall be stronger than the other people. And the elder shall serve the younger. Gen 25:22*

The elder Esau represented the nation of Edom while the younger Jacob represented the nation of Israel. God prophesied that in the future Edom would serve Israel. This was a sovereign choice God made at that time. God’s special people would come through Jacob and not through Esau. Remember that this statement was stated before the children were born, not of the children but of the nations they would become.

## **13 Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.**

Grave damage has been done not only to the context, but also to our view of God when the source of this quote is not understood. While the first quote in verse 12 was uttered before the children were born, this one is found in the very last book of the Old Testament after many centuries of each nations existence. The purpose of the last quote must be understood or its purpose here is twisted.

*I have loved you, saith Jehovah. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother, saith Jehovah: yet I loved Jacob; 3 but Esau I hated, and made his mountains a desolation, and (gave) his heritage to the jackals of the wilderness. 4 Whereas Edom saith, We are beaten down, but we will return and build the waste places; thus saith Jehovah of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and men shall call them The border of wickedness, and The people against whom Jehovah hath indignation for ever. 5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, Jehovah be magnified beyond the border of Israel. Mal 1:2-5*

This is the first in a series of answers God is giving to their complaints about him. He has loved them through all the long years, but they are bitterly disappointed because once again because of their own sins they have not been blessed as God could have blessed them. They were complaining that they could not see his love in the way he was treating their nation. God uses Edom as a real example of what happens when God no longer loves a nation. Edom was on the verge of extinction. God would totally destroy them. They were destroyed because they were wicked and because God did not have any promises to fulfill in them. Israel had many times been as wicked as Edom, but God had promised to bring the Messiah through them so he continue to love and work with them. This is the point of this section. Before they were born, God made some choices. Both nations were engulfed in wickedness, but by sovereign decree he continued to work with Israel. Now, by the same sovereign decree he had ceased to work with Israel as a nation and began to work with the church.

*Hear another parable: There was a man that was a householder, who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about*

it, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. 34 And when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits. 35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them in like manner. 37 But afterward he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38 But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance. 39 And they took him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40 When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen? 41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons. 42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner; This was from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes? 43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. 44 And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken to pieces: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust. 45 And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. Matt 21:33-45

## 14 What shall we say then?

What conclusion shall we now draw from this line of reasoning? Where is this line of reasoning taking us? The “then” sums up all that has been previously stated to draw the appropriate conclusion.

“oun... a conj. indicating that something follows from another necessarily;... Hence it is used in drawing a conclusion .and in connecting sentences together logically, *then, therefore, accordingly, consequently, these things being so...* b. in questions, *then, therefore...*” (Thayer, p. 463-464; 3767)

What will we say now that we know all this?

*eipon...* to speak, say, *whether orally or by letter*; 1. With acc. of the thing... *what shall we say?* i.e. what reply can we make? Or to what does that bring us? Only in the Ep to the Rom. ... 3:5; 4:1; 6:1;7:7; 8:31 9:14,30;...” (Thayer p. 181; 1512)

We can look at this as a check in the midst of the sentence to see if we are at the proper position that the information given thus far was intending to bring us. The following question should be the furthest thing from our minds at this point. There very last thing we should be thinking.

## Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid(MAY IT NEVER BE!!!!)

If at this moment, you have the sense that God is not fair, then you have completely misunderstood the point. If this has lessened your opinion of God and made you feel that he is not “unrighteous, then you had better go back and restudy all that has previously been stated.

“*adikia...* 1. *injustice*, of a judge... 2. *unrighteousness of heart and life...* 3. *a deed violating law and justice, act of unrighteousness...*” (Thayer, p. 12; 93)

There is no injustice with God. It is quite the opposite. To clear up any doubts about this, the Spirit continues to elaborate on the subject.

## 15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.

With another “*for/gar*” the question in the previous passage will be “*explained, made clear and illustrated.*” The circumstances surrounding this statement must be clearly understood if the fullness of their meaning in this context is to be grasped and appreciated.

While Moses was up on mount Sinai for the first forty days, the children of Israel asked Aaron to make the calf.

*And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him. 2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. 3 And all the people brake off the golden rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. 4 And he received it at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it a molten calf: and they said, These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. Exod 32:1-4*

During the events that followed they violated several of the commandments God had made known to them and they had agreed to keep. God was very angry with them and spoke strongly to Moses

about it.

*And Jehovah spake unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, that thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: 8 they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed unto it, and said, These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 9 And Jehovah said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: 10 now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. Exod 32:7-10*

God made another sovereign choice at this moment. The same choice he had made with Jacob he now made with Moses. God could foresee what was going to happen in the wilderness. He offers to begin again with Moses and bring the promised see through him. Moses then intercedes in behalf of the people and God accepts his intercession.

*And Moses besought Jehovah his God, and said, Jehovah, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, that thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying, For evil did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. 14 And Jehovah repented of the evil which he said he would do unto his people. Exod 32:11-14*

Moses then heads down the mountain and after he sees the people, he too becomes angry with them for what they are doing.

*And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. 20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. Exod 32:19-20*

The next day, Moses realizes the gravity of the situation. They have violated the covenant and there was a possibility that God will not give it again intercedes with the following words and is given the following answer as found in Ex 32:30-33:

*And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto Jehovah; peradventure I shall make atonement for your sin. 31 And Moses returned unto Jehovah, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. 32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin-- and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. 33 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Ex 32:30-33*

God later revealed to Moses that due to their stiff necked and rebellious attitude he would no longer personally lead them.

*And Jehovah spake unto Moses, Depart, go up hence, thou and the people that thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land of which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: 2 and I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: 3 unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiffnecked people, lest I consume thee in the way. Exod 33:1-3*

When the people here this, they go into mourning realizing the gravity of what they had done. Moses again intercedes pleading with God to continue to lead them, and Moses further requests that he be allowed to see God. God tells him that he will let all his goodness pass before him, and then once again returns to the earlier idea that Moses had stated. God will be merciful to whom he will be merciful. He sets the criteria.

*Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee, to the end that I may find favor in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. 14 And he said, My presence shall go (with thee), and I will give thee rest. 15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not (with me), carry us not up hence. 16 For wherein now shall it be known that I have found favor in thy sight, I and thy people? is it not in that thou goest with us, so that we are separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth? 17 And Jehovah said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found favor in my sight, and I know thee by name. 18 And he said, Show me, I pray thee, thy glory. 19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of Jehovah before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. Exod 33:13-19*

Mercy and compassion are solely within the domain of God. No one can earn or deserve them. Nor

can anyone barter them for another. They are given only because God in his love has decided to purchase them. He sets the criteria on how they will be offered, on the kind of person he will see fit to give them to. He has the absolute right over his mercy and compassion. This was something that God wanted Moses to fully understand. They have a very close relationship, but it is not so close that God would allow him to make the kind of choice he tried to make in the previous chapter. One which Paul had reiterated himself at the beginning of the chapter.

This is the point we are continually drawn back to. Man is a sinner. He has no means for forgiveness. He must rely upon God to offer that forgiveness and comply with whatever conditions God sets for it. Man is not in any position to set terms.

*And Moses besought Jehovah his God, and said, Jehovah, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, that thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying, For evil did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. 14 And Jehovah repented of the evil which he said he would do unto his people. Exod 32:11-14*

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## 16 So then

This is the eighth time that “so then” has been used Romans(5:18; 7:3,25; 8:12; 9:16,18; 14:12,19). The Spirit uses it when he wants to draw a somewhat stronger conclusion. The term *ara* is added to the general *oun* to add a little more emphasis.

“*ara*... an illative particle(akin, as it seems, to the verbal root *aro* to join, to be fitted...) ... It intimates that, “under these circumstances something either is so or becomes so”... *consequently* ... 2. ... it is placed at the beginning of a sentence; *and so, so then, accordingly*,... 5. *ara oun* a combination peculiar to Paul, at the beginning of a sentence... *ara* is the more logical, *oun* the more formal connective...” (Thayer, p. 71; 686)

“*oun*... indicating that something follows from another necessarily;... it is used in drawing a conclusion and in connecting sentences together logically, *then, therefore, accordingly, consequently, these things being so*...” (Thayer, p. 463-464; 3767)

This conclusion is summing up all that has gone on up to this point in the chapter. “*Under these circumstances something either is so or becomes so*” and “*something follows from another necessarily*.” What are the circumstances?

First, Israel’s plight was causing Paul great pain, but was not due to lack of blessings offered to them by God. 9:1-5

Second, it did not bring God’s word to nought, but perfectly fit in with the Scriptures, because from the very beginning they have revealed that not all who are of Israel or Israel and not all that are of Abraham’s seed are children of the promise. 9:6-9

Third it was God’s intent by using the twin sons of Jacob, to show that his purpose stands by his own sovereign choices and not by any merit on the part of the man. This leads to man’s complete faith and trust in him. For it is all of him. 9:10-13

Fourth, this shows no unrighteousness with God, but exactly the opposite. When God threatened to disinherit Israel for being stiffnecked, Moses interceded for them pleading with God to blot him from his book if God would not forgive them. He later informed Moses that God would decide who was offered mercy and compassion and who was not. 9:15

With these circumstances clearly in mind, this conclusion now follows necessarily. The above facts if seen as they are intended to be seen leads on to see clearly that:

### **it is not of him that willeth,**

This is such a simple point. No one who “wills” to receive God’s mercy and compassion has the means or the ability to set the terms by which it is to be given.

“*thelo*,... (derived apparently fr. *helein* with a fuller aspiration, so that it means prop. to seize with the mind; ...) TO WILL, (*have in mind*,) *intend*; i.e. 1. *to be resolved or determined, to purpose* ... 2. *to desire, to wish*:...” (Thayer p 285-286; 2309)

The will, intent, resolutions, determinations, purposes and thoughts that man has in his own mind cannot bring about the mercy and compassion of God. So many times in the unfolding of the Bible history, God had sought to teach this lesson to us. Man’s will cannot set the terms by which God will be pleased, honored or praised and therefore feel compelled to offer mercy and compassion. The very heart of the faith that makes man righteous understands this.

*Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, And lean not upon thine own understanding: 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths. 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes; Fear Jehovah, and depart from evil: Prov 3:5-7*

*Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? 7 will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, (or) with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6:6-8*

It is not even in man to direct his own steps(Jer 9:23), let alone by his own will and desire to bring mercy and compassion from God. Unfortunately, the Israel that rejected Jesus had fallen into the same trap as so many had before them.

*For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. Rom 10:2-3*

It was the will of the Jews that their own ideas should be substituted for Gods. On a much broader level Paul speaks of the same thing to the Corinthians.

*For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe. 22 Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: 23 but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness; 24 but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. . . . 27 but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; 28 and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, (yea) and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: 29 that no flesh should glory before God. 1 Cor 1:21-24, 27-29*

Hence the first thing we are to learn is that it is not of him that willeth. As Jesus in the garden, it is not my will but God's that must be done(Lk 22:42).

### **nor of him that runneth,**

Just as man does not have the mental capacity to bring the mercy of God, he also does not have the power to hasten or move quickly enough to bring it about.

*"trecho... to run ... a. prop.: of persons in haste, ... of those who run in a race course... b. metaph.: of doctrine rapidly propagated, II Th. 3:1 ; by a metaphor taken from the runners in a race, to exert one's self, strive hard; to spend one's strength in performing or attaining something... the same expression occurs in Grk. writ., denoting to incur extreme peril, which it requires the exertion of all one's efforts to overcome,..." (Thayer, p. 630; 5143)*

Often the man who wills to receive mercy and compassion from God creates great goals to run quickly after. That is the real point of this chapter. God wanted to use the end of the Jewish nation to reveal this clearly.

He had called Abraham because Abraham always hastened and ran in the direction God told him to. He used Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David and countless others for the same reason. He had cast off Saul, Solomon, Jeroboam, and now the Jewish nations because they would hasten and run, but not in the direction God wanted them to run in. What better example than the zeal for God the Jewish nation was then manifesting to prove the utter worthlessness of running in the wrong direction. The truth is that mercy and compassion cannot be gained by such methods. No amount of speed, no amount of "exertion," "striving" or "spending one's strength in performing or attaining something" is going to bring it about.

We need mercy because of rebellion, how can anyone actually believe that God would give mercy to those who are continuing in rebellion? Do we honest think that when a sinner works hard enough at sin that somehow God is going to be impressed with his efforts and offer him mercy? It just makes no sense.

### **but of God that hath mercy.**

With the strong *alla/but* the first two things are dismissed and the reality is now revealed. God is in total absolute and complete control over his mercy. Who receives it and who is denied falls under his dominion. God makes the rules, God sets the standards, no man on earth has any basis to dictate how things will be. No amount of will or energy expended by man has any influence . God has revealed his will, let all beware that they fulfill it. No other basis will avail. "Mercy" is of God.

*"eleeo... (eleos)... Sept. most freq. for ... to be gracious, also for ... to have mercy; several times for... to spare and ... to console; to have mercy on... to succor one afflicted or seeking aid... absol. to succor the afflicted, to bring help to the wretched [ A. V. to show mercy], ... pass. to experience [A. V. obtain] mercy,... Syn. eleeo, oikteiro: el. to feel sympathy with the misery of another, esp. such sympathy as manifests itself in act, less freq. in word; whereas oikt. denotes the inward feeling of compassion which abides in the heart..." (Thayer, p. 203; 1653)*

*"eleos...mercy; kindness or good will toward the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them..." (Thayer, p. 203 1656)*

As one ponder this definition it becomes obvious why mercy must find its source in God. It is his own feeling of sympathy with the misery of man that leads him to a desire to relieve and succor the afflicted. By definition this must come from God. Man cannot earn it and would be foolish to try. Like all others who have authority and power over those who are in dire need, the concern must be to

please them. We must seek for what they want and then give it to them. Never does it work the other way. Only the most arrogant and foolish would seek for mercy from one who has the power to offer it with no concern for their own thoughts and feelings about the matter. If they have already described what it takes to receive mercy, and the criminal or one afflicted with illness refuses to listen, how could they expect mercy?

### **17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up,**

A *for/gar* shows us that this passage too is to illustrate and further elaborate on the above thought. The Spirit has been giving positive elements of God's election now he selects a negative example of a man chosen by God to fulfill a task he was eminently suited for both in "will" and in "running." This man wanted to fight God. He wanted to rapidly and with all his effort fulfill the task of destroying God's people. He was doing exactly what God wanted him to do. Will he receive mercy for it? Will he be praised by God for what he has done? Of course not!

Remember Paul's words to Timothy for they shed great light on what is being said here.

*Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: and, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness. 20 Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some unto honor, and some unto dishonor. 21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work. 2 Tim 2:19-21*

God is always working in every generation to bring about his will. There are some vessels he chooses for tasks of honor, and other vessels that are chosen to complete a task of dishonor. The Spirit makes it very clear that this is not an arbitrary decision on God's part, but is directly under the control of the vessels themselves. It is what we make of ourselves that determines how God chooses to use us.

What did the Scriptures say about Pharaoh? Between the sixth and the seventh plagues these words were spoken. The magicians duplicated the rod, the blood(1), the frogs(2) which hardened Pharaoh's heart. They could not duplicate the lice(3) or anything further, but each time God took away the plague before Pharaoh let Israel go, he again hardened his heart during the respite. After the lice came the flies(4), the murrain upon the cattle(5), and the boils(6). Before sending a plague that would bring great loss of life, God gave the stern warning Paul quotes above.

*And Jehovah said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. 14 For I will this time send all my plagues upon thy heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. 15 For now I had put forth my hand, and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence, and thou hadst been cut off from the earth: 16 but in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, to show thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. 17 As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go? 18 Behold, to-morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the day it was founded even until now. 19 Now therefore send, hasten in thy cattle and all that thou hast in the field; (for) every man and beast that shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. Ex 9:13-19*

God informed Pharaoh of his purpose. God had put him into power. God had raised him up to the position of greatness in order that he might be used to do exactly what God wanted him to do. It was God's will to raise up this man at this time as a vessel for dishonor because he was perfect for the task. His absolute stubborn and rebellious heart would allow God to bring plague after plague upon the wicked and rebellious Egypt. He was just like the water in the flood or the fire and brimstone for Sodom and Gomorrah. He would rebel against God's power right to the very end. God warned him, but even the warning did no good.

This unfortunately was exactly what was happening to those who were left in the nation Israel after God had called the remnant into the church, and is the very reason it is being quoted here.

**that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth.**

These were the things God wanted to accomplish through this vessel of dishonor. Because of his stubborn rebellion, God was able to show in him his power. A man with a softer heart would have repented as the king of Assyria did at the preaching of Jonah, or Nebuchadnezzar finally did after his heart was changed (Dan 4). But Egypt was ripe for judgment and God wanted a man who was so arrogant and so rebellious and stubborn that he would continue to stand in the midst of all God's power and wrath being poured out. He also wanted this so that his name would be published abroad in all the earth. He wanted to do all the great acts of power in order that others might marvel and believe. This worked exactly as God planned. Rahab had heard (Josh 2:10) some things and even in the days of Samuel, though some inaccuracies had crept in, the Philistines were still speaking of it.

*And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. 8 Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? these are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all manner of plagues in the wilderness. 1 Sam 4:7-8*

### **18 So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth.**

Another “*ara oun*” stresses a conclusion that sums up all that has gone on before. “*Under these circumstances something either is so or becomes so*” and “*something follows from another necessarily.*” While 9:16 emphasized mercy, this one emphasizes both mercy and hardening, but both of the passages stress that it is God's decision. In verse 16 it was not up to man's will, but here it is up to God's “will” which is repeated twice.

*“thelo... (derived apparently fr. helein with a fuller aspiration, so that it means prop. to seize with the mind; ...) TO WILL, (have in mind,) intend; i.e. 1. to be resolved or determined, to purpose ... 2. to desire, to wish:...” (Thayer p 285-286; 2309)*

What God resolves, determines, purposes, desires or wishes is the determining factor in those he chooses to offer mercy and those he chooses to harden. Paul brought up Moses as an example of mercy and he brings up Pharaoh as an example of God choosing to “harden.”

*“skleruno... (skleros q.v.) to make hard, to harden; prop. in Hippocr. and Galen; metaph. To render obstinate, stubborn, [A. V. to harden]... pass. ... to be hardened, i.e. become obstinate or stubborn...” (Thayer p. 579; 4645)*

*“skleros... hard, harsh, rough, stiff,... of men, metaph., harsh, stern, hard...” (Thayer, p. 579; 4642)*

At the same moment that God was showing mercy on Israel, he had raised up Pharaoh to harden. It is interesting that the same command that meant mercy to Israel hardened the rebellious Pharaoh. The hardening occurred at the very moment that God asked Pharaoh to let Israel go. Pharaoh's character was of such nature that all God had to do was ask him to do something that he did not want to do and his heart would be hardened. The more God asked the more obstinate and stubborn Pharaoh became.

The point here is not to explain the nature or method of the hardening (though some certainly wax eloquent on it), but simply to establish God's sovereign right to use his creation in any manner that he sees fit based upon his own code of conduct (righteousness and love). Since the scope and extent of hardening is more fully discussed in 22-23, we will deal with the subject more fully at that time. Here, it is simply established that it is God's will and not man's will that makes these decisions. In Moses and Pharaoh it is clearly established that God is God and man is man. That God elects according to his purpose and chooses upon whom he will bestow mercy and compassion and upon whom he will harden.

### **19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he still find fault?**

The Holy Spirit knows that while one class of men reading this will be properly impressed and see it clearly, another group will at this point become exasperated enough to make this exclamation. This is a false conclusion, completely out of harmony with the facts just revealed. But it's possibility and the ability it has to illustrate the truth by destroying the error is enough to verbalize it. The idea of result comes from “then.”

*“oun... a conj. indicating that something follows from another necessarily;... used in drawing a conclusion b. in questions, then, therefore...” (Thayer, p. 463-464; 3767)*

Those who misconstrue the above reasoning and draw that they believe to be the necessary conclusion will form this question. Although this question is totally unwarranted, it is just like a rebellious man to come up with it. Their assumption, "if God uses man in the manner described above, then he could not possibly "find fault" with him for what he has done.

*"memphomai... "to blame," "to scold," "to upbraid," ... "to chide," "to reproach,"... "to declare oneself dissatisfied with something..." Kittel Vol 4 p 571-574)*

The essence of this point is simple. God selected Pharaoh to do an important duty. God needed a stubborn and rebellious man to oppose him. He selected and put Pharaoh into that position for that very reason. Pharaoh did exactly what God wanted him to do. Since Pharaoh was only doing what God wanted him to, how could God chide, scold, blame or reproach him? How can God punish those he has hardened and forced to do his will?

It is hard for those who are submissive to God and who have understood the line of thought in Romans since the first chapter to see how anyone could so fully miss the point. It is man's free-will that brings about God's use. God did not make Moses a vessel of mercy any more than he made Pharaoh a vessel of wrath. Each chose their own course. If we learned nothing else in Romans 5-7 we learned that Adam sinned, but we did not die because Adam sinned. We died because we sinned! We were all alive apart from the law but when the commandment came, our flesh craved to break it and did so. The friction between the flesh and the spirit eventually leads to a winner. Flesh or spirit comes out in control. God tries to lead all men to repentance and a knowledge of the truth, but the stubborn and hardened won't listen. This is why God can find fault and give blame. "All have sinned and fallen short of his glory" by their own freewill. All men are fully responsible for their actions and therefore for how God can use them. Regardless of how they are used, God can find fault.

Once again, it is clearly established in this question that God is the sovereign ruler over all things. He does not need to get approval from man for anything that he does. He decides who will be the people through whom the chosen seed will come. He decides who he will harden and who he will be merciful to. But he is also just and righteous. He will never do this in an arbitrary or unfair manner.

Remember the context and remember the goal. Paul's pain and sorrow comes from the attitude that poses questions like these. He is seeking through inspiration to disarm and destroy the attitude so the soul of the one who holds it can be saved. He has indeed taught that God is sovereign. That he chooses based upon his own criteria and man has no say in it. Though some read into this the removal of man's will, it is false. Man can be blamed because man is fully responsible for the outcome.

### **For who withstandeth his will?**

The "*gar/for*" gives the true *reason* and *cause* for this question. Since God has absolute authority man has no ability to "withstand" his will.

*"anth-istemi... to set against;... to set one's self against, to withstand, resist, oppose..." (Thayer p. 46; 436).*

Who can successfully do the opposite of what God desires. Who can "*resist*" or "*oppose*" that which God intends and purposes? On the surface this may appear to be a valid question, but anyone who could ask such a question has not been following the reasoning of the book. It is because man can withstand God's will that this book has been written. It's very theme is that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, and that God out of love and mercy has offered a second chance through submission and obedience to all who will believe the gospel (Rom 1:16-17). Those who would dare to ask such a question have no real knowledge of God's character. This kind of reasoning manifest a proud arrogant demeanor. Who else but one with a very high estimate of himself would dare make such a statement? Yet God still loves and wants to help even those who would ask such questions. He now tries to help.

### **20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?**

The real issue here has nothing to do with the objection, but with the audacity of one who would think and dare to utter such thoughts. The term “reply” is stronger in Greek than in English.

*ant-apo-krinomai... to contradict in reply, to answer by contradicting, reply against...”* (Thayer p. 49; 470)

The Spirit considers this line of reasoning to be a contraction to what has actually been revealed. The exact opposite of what is being argued here is actually what he has revealed. Hence this is “contradicting in reply,” or “replying against” God. This ought to stop anyone in their tracks. God thoughts and ways are too far above our own for us to have any basis for comparison

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isa 55:8-9*

Remember the tragic results when Job sought to question God as those here? God simply asked a few questions and Job was completely ashamed of himself.

*Then Jehovah answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 2 Who is this that darkeneth counsel By words without knowledge? 3 Gird up now thy loins like a man; For I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. 4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. . . 6 Then Jehovah answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 7 Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. 8 Wilt thou even annul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified? Job 38:1-4, 40:6-8*

No one is mentally equipped for such a confrontation. So, all who answer back to God must be brought face to face with their arrogance and foolishness. Not only is no one so equipped, but the very nature of the issue would preclude such reasoning. No one ought to so “reply against” God.

### **Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus?**

The mental picture this conjures up would be humorous if it were not so serious. A “thing formed” is something that has no power to make itself and is hence fortunate to exist at all.

*“Plasma... what has been moulded or formed, as from wax... the thing formed by a potter, earthen vessel...”* (Thayer p. 515; 4110)

Such things do not exist unless another with the power and wisdom to make it has the desire to form it. Imagine a plate or spoon with just enough intelligence to asking its creator with absolute power and dominion why he made me into this. No formed thing ever questions or complains about its existence. First because it has no power to stop it and second because it would not exist at all except for the will of the one who formed it.

Some men have a higher opinion of their station than is warranted. Though God gave man limited dominion over this earth, and even made him in his image and likeness, standing before God we have no such standing. In spite of man’s reasoning ability and limited dominion he is still only a created being(thing formed), made by God to fulfill his purposes and completely under his dominion.

### **21 Or hath not the potter a right over the clay,**

This is a thought first set forth in Isaiah and Jeremiah. It is wise to see the background before commenting on the verse.

*Woe unto them that hide deep their counsel from Jehovah, and whose works are in the dark, and that say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? 16 Ye turn things upside down! Shall the potter be esteemed as clay; that the thing made should say of him that made it, He made me not; or the thing formed say of him that formed it, He hath no understanding? Isa 29:15-16*

In this scripture, God rebukes the children of Israel in a manner similar to here. They had turned things upside down. The clay was acting as though there were no potter, just more clay. They were treating God as fellow clay. God rebukes them sharply for this foolish reasoning. He is much more than they were making him out to be.

*But now, O Jehovah, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Isa 64:8*

This passage conveys how the godly see themselves in God’s sight. It is fine with them to be the

clay and they are grateful to the potter for making them as they are. They also see God as being much greater than they are and are humble and submissive to him.

*The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, 2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. 3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he was making a work on the wheels. 4 And when the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Jer 18:1-12*

This last passage is the sad reality and a strong rebuke to those who reject God. As Jeremiah watches the potter making his vessels out of clay, he sees the reality of God's work among men. The potter take the material he has been given and molds it into what he hopes will be a finished product. In this case the product must be changed because something occurred that kept it from becoming what he had originally intended. In just the same manner God intends for all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth(I Tim 2:4-5). He is longsuffering and waits for all to come to repentance. But when a time comes when he sees that this can no longer be(because of the rebellious nature of the heart of the one he has been working with, he can then form it into a vessel that will still be used for his honor and glory.

*Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, 6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith Jehovah. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. 7 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; 8 if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. 9 And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; 10 if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. 11 Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith Jehovah: Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your doings. 12 But they say, It is in vain; for we will walk after our own devices, and we will do every one after the stubbornness of his evil heart. Jer 18:1-12*

As God moves to the reality, God affirms that he can in fact do to Israel just what the potter did. If he plans to pluck up, break down or destroy a nation, and the nation turns from its evil, then God will make an entirely different use out of the nation and change his mind(repent) of the evil he had intended to do it. On the other hand if he planned on building and planting a nation and they do that which is evil in his sight, and no obey his voice, he will again just as the potter, repent(change his mind) regarding the good that he had planned to do. Sad to say even this did not move Israel to a change in the days of Jeremiah.

But from these three Scriptures we get a complete understanding of the use of the symbol of God as the potter. He has absolute right over the life of every man. Through righteous and loving principles, God determines how to deal with each vessel(man) depending upon his own actions and thoughts.

### **from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?**

Though he is only continuing the illustration of what a potter can do with his lump of clay, the application is obvious. A potter goes out to the field and selects his clay. He then brings the clay back and after examining it makes the decisions as to what he will make out of each part. No one questions his right to do this. Other men do not question this and the clay certainly does not.

Man is the obvious application. We all come from the same lump of earth(Adam & Eve and after their kind Gen 2:7, 21-23), God does make a distinction between them, and now explains what criteria he uses for his decisions.

## **22 What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known,**

The question which begins here and continue through to the end of verse 24 seems to be repeated back at the objector of verse 19. First Paul used the Biblical illustration of the potter and the clay to respond to his objection. Now he poses this question back at the objector. Look at the entire question:

*What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: 23 and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, 24 (even) us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the*

*Gentiles? Rom 9:22-24*

What is he asking? The question is built upon the following scenario. During all the years that God is working out his purpose, he finds it necessary from time to time to show his wrath and make his power known. He did this during the days of Noah, Sodom & Gomorrah, Egypt, and many times during Jewish apostasies. When these circumstances arose, would it be inappropriate for God to endure with longsuffering vessels of wrath who were even then fitted for destruction, and allow them to live long enough and to be used in such a way that God can make known the riches of his glory upon the vessels of mercy he chose in eternity for glory? Specifically us whom he has called both from the Jews and from the Gentiles?

It is impossible to find any fault with God under this circumstance, and it is the very circumstance that is described above in Pharaoh and with very little divergence every time thereafter.

There are times when God is “willing” to show his wrath.

*“thelo,... (derived apparently fr. helein with a fuller aspiration, so that it means prop. to seize with the mind; ...) TO WILL, (have in mind,) intend; i.e. 1. to be resolved or determined, to purpose ... 2. to desire, to wish:...” (Thayer p 285-286; 2309)*

Times when God “resolves, determines and purposes” that he needs “to show” his wrath.

*“endeiknuni: to point out, ... in the N. T. only in Middle... to show one’s self in something, show something in one’s self... 1. to show, demonstrate, prove, whether by arguments or by acts... 2. to manifest, display, put forth...” (Thayer, p. 213; 1731)*

This does not necessarily happen in every generation. But when a nation becomes so wicked that it is time for God to act, there are times when God wants to make a special circumstance out of it. While he used water for the ancient world and fire and brimstone for Sodom and Gomorrah, God had a different plan for Egypt. God wanted to make a demonstration. He wanted to manifest and display something clearly. This might lead to the repentance of future vessels of wrath to increase his vessels of mercy. He wanted his “wrath” to be clearly understood.

*“orge,...(fr orgao to teem, denoting an internal motion, esp that of plants and fruits swelling with juice... the natural disposition, temper, character; movement or agitation of soul, impulse, desire, any violent emotion, but esp. (and chiefly in Attic) anger. In bibl. Grk. anger, wrath, indignation... anger exhibited in punishing, hence used for the punishment itself... The orge attributed to God in the N. T. is that in God which stands opposed to man’s disobedience, obduracy(esp in resisting the gospel) and sin, and manifests itself in punishing the same... wrath, outburst of anger,... to provoke, arouse to anger; pass. to be provoked to anger, be angry, be wroth;...” (Thayer, p. 452; 3709)*

God wanted to show his true feelings at the disobedience and rebellion of man. He showed his “*anger exhibited in punishing.*” God was deeply troubled by the conduct of Egypt and the nations of Canaan. The iniquity of the Amorite had become full, and Egypt was right there with them. They were full of idolatry, killing Hebrew infants they saw as a threat, and they treated Israel with contempt. God spoke of them in a very negative way as he warned Israel of the purity he expected to see in them.

*After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their statutes. Lev 18:3*

Egypt was punished for her iniquity. Before God sent Moses, she had made herself a vessel wrath. The man who became Pharaoh was simply one of these. He deserved to be punished for his conduct. But God wanted to use Egypt in a way that would bless those he loved. He also wanted to make his power “known.”

*“gnorizo... 1. trans. to make known... in pass., to become known, be recognized... 2. intrans. to know...” (Thayer, p. 119; 1107)*

He wanted it to be recognized and understood by those who lived in all future generations and who would read what God had done.

*“dunatos... able, powerful, mighty, strong;... 1. absolutely; a. mighty in wealth and influence... b. strong in soul; to bear calamities and trials with fortitude and patience... strong in Christian virtue... firm in conviction and faith... 2. in construction; a... to be able to do something... b. mighty i.e. excelling in something... c. mighty i.e. having power*

for something..." (Thayer, p. 160; 1415)

God was willing to tolerate the continued existence of this wicked and corrupt souls in order to allow those who are called both from the Jews and from the Gentiles to be comforted in the knowledge of the great extent of God's power as it was revealed in the coming out of Egypt. Much and lasting God has been accomplished by God's wisdom here. This is why he:

### **endured with much longsuffering**

To help clarify the circumstances, the Spirit first describes God reaction to such people. Their character was of such a foul nature, that God "endured" them with much longsuffering.

"phero... to bear, i.e. 1. to carry; a. to carry some burden 2. to bear i.e. endure..." (Thayer p. 650; 5342)

He tolerated and endured them. He did not enjoy them. It required "much" longsuffering to do it.

"*polus*,... b. with nouns denoting an action an emotion, a state, which can be said to have as it were measure, weight, force, intensity, size, continuance, or repetition, *much* l. q. *great, strong, intense, large*... c. of time *much, long*... d. Neut. sing. *POLU, much*, substantively, l. q. many things... *much*, adverbially, of the mode and degree of an action..." (Thayer, p. 529; 4183)

It required "great, strong and intense" longsuffering.

"*makrothumia*,... [c.f. *makrothumeo*] 1. *patience, endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance*,...2. *patience, forbearance, long-suffering, slowness in avenging wrongs*... the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong. ... opposed to ... wrath or revenge..." (Thayer, p. 387; 3115)

"*makrothumeo*... to be of a long spirit, 2. to be patient in bearing the offenses and injuries of others; to be mild and slow in avenging; to be long-suffering, slow to anger, slow to punish..." (Thayer, p. 387; 3116)

A part of God's character is his ability to be "slow to anger and slow to punish" and "to bear with the offenses and injuries of others." These vessels of wrath living during the time of Pharaoh were only fitted for destruction, but during the time necessary for God to bring about his greater purpose, he tolerated these corrupt beings with great and intense longsuffering. Peter uses this term in much the same way to describe God's feelings during the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared.

*that aforesaid were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: 1 Pet 3:20*

During the days of Noah, God waited for the ark to be prepared so he could save all the animals and those who entered the ark. The people deserved to be put to death the moment God appeared to Noah, but he waited patiently, enduring their wickedness while the ark was being prepared. Once the ark was prepared, God poured out his wrath on the world that was. Some people are nothing more than,

### **vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction:**

The term "vessel" is taken from the previous verse where the potter was said to make vessels out of the clay. God also made man out of the same lump, but some are "vessels" of wrath.

"*skeuos*...1. a vessel... *skeuos eis timen*, unto honor, i.e. for honorable use, Rom. 9:21; 2 Tim 2:21, *eis atimaian*, unto dishonor, i.e. for a low use... *skeue eleous*, fitted to receive mercy.." 2. *An implement; plur. household utensils, domestic gear... the tackle and armament of vessels... metaph. of a man...*" (Thayer, p. 577; 4632)

This term has a variety of uses in the NT that ought to be pondered to comprehend what is being affirmed here.

*But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake. Acts 9:15-16*

*For this is the will of God, (even) your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication; 4 that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God; 6 that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter: because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified. 1Thes 4:3-6*

*Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some unto honor, and some unto dishonor. 21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work. 2 Tim 2:20-21*

The full variety of its use is clearly seen. As is the obvious point that it is up to us to make ourselves into one or the other of these vessels. God does not arbitrarily choose. Paul was chosen because he did it ignorantly in unbelief (1 Tim 1:13). Though our own sanctification, we keep our vessel pure not in the passion of lust as the Gentiles who will have God's wrath poured out upon them. By our own purging we make ourselves a vessel of honor. How much clearer can God make it. We are all born without sin. When the commandment comes, sin revives and we die. What we do next determines whether we become a vessel of wrath who will be cast into the lake of fire or a vessel of mercy to be saved for eternity. Those who do not purge, cleanse or believe and who hinder the truth in unrighteousness will have God's wrath poured out upon them.

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

*and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: 12 that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. II Th 2:10-12*

Wrath is all such people are "fitted" for.

*"kat-artizo...to render artios i.e. fit, sound, complete... to mend(what has been broken), to repair... l. q. to complete... b. to fit out, equip, put in order, arrange..." (Thayer, P. 336; 2675 )*

They have equipped arranged and fitted themselves out for wrath. They refuse to believe the truth. Refuse to believe in God, hinder the truth in unrighteousness and willingly believe lies. They are only vessels "unto" destruction. They will not allow God to do anything else but use them for that purpose.

*"eis,... a Prep. governing the Accusative, and denoting entrance into, or direction and limit: into, to, towards, for, among. It is used II. eis after words indicating motion or direction or end; 3. it denotes the end; and a. the end to which a thing reaches or extends, i.e. measure or degree... b. the end which a thing is adapted to attain... c. the end which one has in view, i.e. object, purpose;... d. the end by which a thing is completed, i.e. the result or effect... (Thayer, p. 183-186; 1519).*

*"apoleia,... 1. actively, a destroying, utter destruction... 2. passively, a perishing, ruin, destruction... in particular, the destruction which consists in the loss of eternal life, eternal misery, perdition, the lot of those excluded from the kingdom of God." (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 70-71; 684)*

Their own character has doomed them to death long before God decided to do anything with them. Once they had so corrupted themselves that only their own destruction was left, still God did not pour out on them what they deserved, but waited, allowing them life which they used as a further opportunity to sin, finding something useful that they could perform for him even in their great wickedness.

*But these rail at whatsoever things they know not: and what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things are they destroyed. 11 Woe unto them! For they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. 12 These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn leaves without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; 13 Wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever. 14 And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones, 15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. Jude 1:10-15*

*And you (did he make alive,) when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, 2 wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; 3 among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest:-- Eph 2:1-3*

## **23 and that he might make known**

Remember, this is the second part of the long question that begin in the previous verse.

*What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: 23 and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, 24 (even) us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles? Rom 9:22-24*

While the previous verse explaining the use God made of the wicked vessels of wrath and his purposes of letting them experience his wrath and power, this verse begins to explain his purpose in doing so in regard to the vessels of mercy he had planned for in eternity. He uses “that” to express this purpose.

*“hina... It a final conjunction(for from local direction, indicated by the adverb, the transition was easy to mental direction or intention)denoting purpose and end: to the intent that; to the end that, in order that;... it is used 1. prop of the purpose or end;... “ (Thayer, p. 302-304; 2443)*

God’s reasons for tolerating the wicked and using them to further his own ends extended beyond showing them his wrath and power. It also was done “to the intent that,” “to the end that,” and “in order that” he might make known the riches of his glory on vessels of mercy. Just as he wanted his power and his wrath made known to the vessels of wrath(wicked), he wanted the riches of his glory to be made known to the vessels of mercy(those who believe and obey).

### **the riches of his glory**

Obviously some things cannot be seen or understood unless they are displayed. We saw in the very beginning of Romans that God’s character and attributes can only be seen through things that are created by him to display them to us.

*For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, (even) his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: Rom 1:20*

In exactly the same way that God’s everlasting power and divinity are perceived through the things that are made, the “riches” of his glory can be seen by pondering his mighty acts of power against the wicked.

*“ploutos,... riches, wealth; a. prop. and absol. abundance of external possessions... b. univ. fullness, abundance, plenitude ...” (Thayer, p. 519; 4149)*

We see his glory displayed in all its *fullness, abundance,” and plenitude.”* There is a wealth of it displayed. How many times in the New Testament has Jesus along with his apostles and prophets referred to these events. References to the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Egypt, the children of Israel in the wilderness, Elijah’s contest with the prophets of Baal, These events create a powerful impression on the minds of believing saints. They were written down for our admonition, learning and example.

*Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 1 Cor 10:11-12*

*For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; 5 and spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly; 7 and delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed (his) righteous soul from day to day with (their) lawless deeds): 9 the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment; 10 but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement, and despise dominion. Daring, self-willed, they tremble not to rail at dignities: 11 whereas angels, though greater in might and power, bring not a railing judgment against them before the Lord. 12 But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed, 2 Pet 2:4-12*

We will have to wait until the judgment day to find out how much good has been done for the vessels of mercy and how many vessels of wrath have been changed into vessels of mercy because God dealt with the wicked in this manner.

### **upon vessels of mercy,**

Just as there are vessels of wrath in the previous verse, there are also vessels of mercy. Everything said about vessels above applies here for it is the same word. Who are these vessels of mercy? There can be no doubt since the Spirit identifies them in the next verse. They are *“even us who are called.”* Once again, it is wise to see who these people are. First, God’s own desire as to who these

people are must be pondered.

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16*

*This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4 who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim 2:3-4*

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 2 Pet 3:9*

God wants everyone to be called. He wants all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth and whosoever believeth on him will not perish. This answers who the vessels of mercy are. Everyone who will believe and obey the gospel. God created the gospel to draw and make vessels of mercy while repelling and condemning vessels of wrath.

*For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, (are called): 27 but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; 28 and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, (yea) and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: 29 that no flesh should glory before God. 1 Cor 1:26-29*

The choice is ours. We can purge ourselves, submit to God, trust and obey and stop leaning on our own understanding and make ourselves into vessels of mercy. The only other choice is to rebel and in arrogance remain vessels of wrath. Vessels of wrath who have made themselves into vessels fitted only for destruction have little room to complain regarding the use God makes of them.

### **which he afore prepared unto glory,**

This is the same sentiment as that expressed in the previous chapter, looked at from a slightly different perspective.

*For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained (to be) conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: 30 and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Rom 8:29-30*

He uses the term “afore prepared” to describe these what God had in mind for these vessels of mercy.

*“pro-etoimazo... to prepare before, to make ready beforehand...” (Thayer p. 539; 4282)*

*hetoimazo... to make ready, to prepare, absol. to make the necessary preparations, to get everything ready, of preparing a feast...” (Thayer p. 255; 2090)*

God made all the necessary preparations and go everything ready beforehand. God wanted to do everything necessary and possible that he might bring these vessels of mercy to glory. Every thing possible to help them was taken into consideration. Bringing them to glory was the purpose and reason(eis) for all of it. They are God’s inheritance and he is very interested in them.

*having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, Eph 1:18*

### **24 (even) us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles?**

The central chord of the theme of Romans is again struck. The gospel is both the power of God unto salvation and the means by which Christians are called.

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

*But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. II Th 2:13-14*

We have now come full circle, and are right back where the eighth chapter left us. The reasons for the Jewish rejection of Jesus and the wrath about to be poured out upon them have been clearly explained, and God’s thoughts and ways have been revealed for his people to understand.

In eternity, God saw exactly the way things would transpire. There would be men who would make themselves into vessels of wrath and dishonor by their own choices. There would also be vessels of mercy and honor who would fully submit to, trust and honor God. They would do whatever God asked them to do at whatever cost to themselves. God selected such vessels of mercy and made covenants with them. His covenant with Abraham did not bind him to any man made ideas about how he must act. His promise continued with Isaac, then with Jacob. He chose how and in what way he would bring about his purpose.

This was not only true for the vessels of mercy, but also of the vessels of wrath. At what ever time and in what ever way he chose, he would use those vessels of wrath fitted only for destruction to bring about his purpose. He hardened them by asking them to do things that their own stubborn will would refuse to do. All of this was done to bring blessings and honor on the vessels of mercy that he had afore prepared for glory.

If this sounds new and novel, it isn't. God has always worked like this. The Spirit now cites some of the many prophets in the Old Testament who said exactly the same thing.

**25 As he saith also in Hosea, I will call that my people, which was not my people; And her beloved, that was not beloved.**

The "as" here is a conjunction of purpose and of consequence.

*"hos... an adverbial form of the relative pronoun hos, he, ho, which is used in comparison, as, like as, even as, according as, in the same manner as, etc. ... but it also assumes the nature of a conjunction, of time, of purpose, and of consequence... (Thayer, p. 680-682; 5613)*

Everything that Paul has just finished saying is "like as" "even as" "according as" and "in the same manner as" what Hosea said so many hundreds of years earlier. Hosea lived and prophesied to Israel (the ten tribes) just before they were carried into Assyria. Yet though so long ago, the Spirit used him to say the same things to them in prophesy that Paul was now revealing to the Romans. Perhaps what they could not believe when Paul said it, they could be convinced of when one of their own revered prophets said the same thing.

A little background is necessary to fully appreciate both the book of Hosea and the prophesy here quoted. Since the time when God split ten of the tribes away from the house of David due to Solomon's apostasy, they had been sinker ever deeper into idolatry. Their new king Jeroboam drove them from away serving Jehovah by creating new places, feast days and priesthood and they never returned from it.

*For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king; and Jeroboam drove Israel from following Jehovah, and made them sin a great sin. 22 And the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; 23 until Jehovah removed Israel out of his sight, as he spake by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day. II Kings 17:21-24*

Hosea was sent near the end. Just before God sent Assyria (another vessel of wrath used for God's purposes). Hosea is one of the most tragic in terms of his personal life of all the prophets. Because of the gross immorality among the people, it appears that any choice Hosea of a wife among Israel would led to his being married to a harlot.

*They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and terebinths, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters play the harlot, and your brides commit adultery. 14 I will not punish your daughters when they play the harlot, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for (the men) themselves go apart with harlots, and they sacrifice with the prostitutes; and the people that doth not understand shall be overthrown. Hosea 4:13-14*

His own wife was among this type of woman.

*When Jehovah spake at the first by Hosea, Jehovah said unto Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom; for the land doth commit great whoredom, (departing) from Jehovah. 3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; and she conceived, and bare him a son. Hosea 1:2-3*

Hosea then has three children this woman. The names of the children are chosen by Jehovah and each reflects some characteristic of Israel at that time. The first is named Jezreel in

commemoration of the valley where Jehu killed Ahab's seventy sons. As a murderer, vengeance would be poured out upon him. Hosea's second child was called Lo-Ruhamah which is interpreted no mercy. God explained that the name signified that he would no longer have mercy upon Israel. The third child is named Lo-ammi which means "no people," because God was casting off Israel and they would no longer be his people.

*And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And (Jehovah) said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah; for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, that I should in any wise pardon them. Hosea 1:6*

*Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. 9 And (Jehovah) said, Call his name Lo-ammi; for ye are not my people, and I will not be your (God). Hosea 1:8-9*

Not long after the writing of the book, Assyria came to Israel and took the ten tribes of Israel captive. They were completely cast off and God had warned them before going in that they would not be coming back. He has made them equal with the Gentiles, they are no longer his people. Yet God does not leave them in doubt as to the mercy that will be granted to them at some future time (the time of the coming Messiah).

*Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass that, in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, it shall be said unto them, (Ye are) the sons of the living God. 11 And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint themselves one head, and shall go up from the land; for great shall be the day of Jezreel. Hosea 1:10-11*

Later God describes what it will be like for her when she is cut off from God, no longer his people and no longer the recipient of mercy.

*Therefore will I take back my grain in the time thereof, and my new wine in the season thereof, and will pluck away my wool and my flax which should have covered her nakedness. 10 And now will I uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of my hand. 11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feasts, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn assemblies. 12 And I will lay waste her vines and her fig-trees, whereof she hath said, These are my hire that my lovers have given me; and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. 13 And I will visit upon her the days of the Baalim, unto which she burned incense, when she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith Jehovah.*

Later, God will bring her back to him and once again offer her all the blessings he had then taken away.

*Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. 15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall make answer there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. 16 And it shall be at that day, saith Jehovah, that thou shalt call me Ishi, and shalt call me no more Baali. 17 For I will take away the names of the Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be mentioned by their name. 18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the birds of the heavens, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the land, and will make them to lie down safely. 19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in justice, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. 20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know Jehovah. 21 And it shall come to pass in that day, I will answer, saith Jehovah, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth; 22 and the earth shall answer the grain, and the new wine, and the oil; and they shall answer Jezreel. 23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them that were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, (Thou art) my God. Hosea 2:9-23*

**26 And it shall be, (that) in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, There shall they be called sons of the living God.**

Remember that these two passages from Hosea(2:23; 1:10), are both quoted to prove the statement that God wanted to show the riches of his glory to vessels of mercy even us(Christians who had been called and obeyed the gospel) both from the Jews and from the Gentiles. This was the second chance Hosea was speaking of. It was being offered to them during the reign of the Messiah in the restored kingdom of David.

The point is simple and clear. In Hosea, God cast off his people just as he had cast off the Gentiles. They were both equal at that time for they were both not God's people. When the Jews violated

God's covenant, there was nothing left about them to make the God's chosen and special people. When God called them back(the ten tribes), they were no different than Gentiles. Hence God was perfectly justified to call them back on an equal footing with the Gentiles.

This is the key to this passage. It was said, "ye are not my people." This was said of the Gentiles after God called Israel, and it was true of Israel after God rejected them too.

**27 And Isaiah crieth concerning Israel, If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved:**

Isaiah began prophesying to two tribes left in Judah at about the same time that Hosea and Amos were preaching to the ten tribes of Israel. Although Isaiah duty was primarily to Judah, he spoke occasionally of the fate of Israel. Assyria was to come as the rod of God's anger and staff of his indignation upon both Israel and upon Judah.

*Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! 6 I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few. Isa 10:5-7*

*Wherefore it shall come to pass, that, when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. 13 For he hath said, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I have understanding; and I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures, and like a valiant man I have brought down them that sit (on thrones): 14 and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the peoples; and as one gathereth eggs that are forsaken, have I gathered all the earth: and there was none that moved the wing, or that opened the mouth, or chirped. 15 Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? shall the saw magnify itself against him that wieldeth it? as if a rod should wield them that lift it up, (or) as if a staff should lift up (him that is) not wood. 16 Therefore will the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory there shall be kindled a burning like the burning of fire. . . . 20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and they that are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again lean upon him that smote them, but shall lean upon Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21 A remnant shall return, (even) the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. 22 For though thy people, Israel, be as the sand of the sea, (only) a remnant of them shall return: a destruction (is) determined, overflowing with righteousness. Isa 10:12-16, 20-22*

Again in the context of Isaiah we see the same things Paul has described here in Romans. Assyria is the vessel of God's wrath used against other vessels of wrath, but ultimately to help the vessels of mercy. Secondly, Isaiah made it clear that not all who are Israel are of Israel. Though Israel should extend out as the sand of the sea, only a remnant are going to be saved. Only a remnant is of Israel.

Paul explains in Romans that what the Spirit meant was that the remnant would return, not physically, but spiritually, which would bring their salvation. Hence even now, though but a remnant is being saved, it is exactly as Isaiah said it would be so many years earlier.

**28 for the Lord will execute (his) word upon the earth,**

The passage in Isaiah actually continues in the following manner.

*For a full end, and that determined, will the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, make in the midst of all the earth. 24 Therefore thus saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian, though he smite thee with the rod, and lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. 25 For yet a very little while, and the indignation (against thee) shall be accomplished, and mine anger (shall be directed) to his destruction. Isa 10:23-25*

God promised his remnant that they did not need to be afraid of the Assyrian. He would soon finish the job God had given him to do in accomplishing his anger on Israel for their sins. Once that was completed, God would punish him for his evil. Yet the Spirit here completes the thought by showing its real meaning for those reading it today. What God had said he would do with Assyria had already been accomplished, what he was going to do to the remainder of Israel was yet to come, but both would be dealt with in the same manner.

With a *gar/for* the Spirit forces us to understand that this is the reason, cause of fulfillment of the previous thought. Though Israel is as the sand of the sea only a remnant will be saved. What of the

rest? The Lord will “execute” his word.

*poieo...* I. *to make ...* 1. ... a. with the names of the things made, *to produce, construct, form, fashion, etc.* ... *to create produce:* of God, as the author of all things... absol. of men, *to labor, to do work... to be operative, exercise activity ...* b. joined to nouns denoting a state or condition, it signifies *to be the author or, to cause ...* 2. With additions to the accusative which define or limit the idea of making... 3. As the active *poiein...*, so also the middle *poieisthai, ... to be the author of a thing (to cause, bring about...)*... II *to do...* i.e. *to follow some method in expressing by deeds the feelings and thoughts of the mind...* a. univ., with adverbs describing the mode of action... with nouns which denote a command, or some rule of action *poio* signifies *to carry out, to execute...* in bibl. Grk. *to do the law, meet its demands...* with nouns describing a plan or course of action, *to perform, accomplish...* (Thayer, p. 524-527; 4160)

Many of these definitions would apply here. God is going to “*create or produce*” what his word decrees. God is going to “*cause or bring about*” his word. God is going “*to carry out and execute*” his word by “*performing or accomplishing*” it. God did every single thing he told the Jews through Isaiah. He used Assyria to take the 10 tribes into captivity and to punish many in Judah. After he had completed that work, he did punish Assyria by allowing Babylon to destroy her. God executed it then, he would execute it again in the days of Paul as once again, we who are here can look back on and see that once again, he did exactly what he said he would do. He destroyed Jerusalem less than twenty years after this book was written.

### **finishing it and cutting it short.**

The method by which God will perform and execute his word is specified as “finishing” it.

*sun-telon...* 1. *to end together or at the same time.* 2. *to end completely; bring to an end, finish, complete...* 3 *accomplish, bring to fulfilment...* 4. *to effect, make...* 5. *To finish, i.e. in a use foreign to Grk. Writ., to make an end of... to bring to an end, destroy...* (Thayer p. 606; 4931)

Thus in the strongest terms, the Spirit describes how God’s word is accomplished. For good or for evil, God’s word is always finished. It is always ended completely, finished and completed. It is always accomplished and brought to fulfilment. In this case, it refers to the judgement upon those who were not of the remnant. Yet not only will God finish it, he will also “cut it short.”

*suntemno...* 1. *to cut in pieces* 2. *to cut short* metaphorically: *to dispatch briefly, to execute or to finish quickly ... to bring a prophecy or decree speedily to accomplishment, Ro. 9:28...* (Thayer p. 606; 4932)

God said he would only save a remnant and would fully bring to completion that promise. It was done quickly and completely. As noted above, not only was this done in Isaiah’ day, it was done again in Paul’s.

### **29 And, as Isaiah hath said before,**

This is much earlier in the book, in the very first chapter. The passage is so rich and full of power that we need to read quite a lot to see the full context.

*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. 3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; (but) Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. 4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly! they have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged (and gone) backward. 5 Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; (but) wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil. 7 Your country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. 8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. 9 **Except Jehovah of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah.** 10 Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. 11 What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. 12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts? 13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,-- I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them. 15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. 16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17 learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the*

widow. 18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. 19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: 20 but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it. Isa 1:2-20

God had nourished and brought up children, but they had rebelled, Israel was a sinful nation, a people full of iniquity who had forsaken and despised their God. There is no soundness in them. If they had not had that small remnant, God would have left them exactly as he did Sodom and Gomorrah. Even then the rulers were like those in Sodom so God addresses them in that manner. God hates their sacrifices and sabbaths. He will not hear their prayers for their hands are full of blood. His offer of pardon still remains for a time, but who will take it? This is the background for the statement Paul quotes here.

**Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We had become as Sodom, and had been made like unto Gomorrah.**

This was the sad reality of the nation when Isaiah was called to preach. They were not of Israel, they were of Sodom. They would have ended up exactly like them if it had not been for the seed God had left. Because Israel had become as corrupt and immoral as Sodom and Gomorrah, God was even then justified in giving them the same end. The difference was that though Abraham asked God to spare it if he could find enough righteous, God had not found enough. There was still enough seed. Of the seven thousand that had not bowed their knee to Baal in Elijah's day(I Kings 19:18), some of their offspring still remained. It was only these God was concerned with. The others would perish.

The Jews of Paul's day should have recognized the often spoken concept of a righteous remnant. In each generation, these and these alone would be saved. If it had not been for these, The nation of Israel would have ended as did Sodom and Gomorrah. In AD 70, the physical nation did so end. Only the remnant that was pulled out through the preaching of the gospel and became a part of the spiritual kingdom of Israel was saved.

### **30 What shall we say then?**

As he did in 4:1, 6:1, 7:7, 8:31 and 9:14, the Spirit now forces us to sum up what we have learned so far and draw a conclusion. What are we summing up? Beginning in 9:15 up to this point what has he affirmed?

1. *God has mercy and compassion based upon his own will 9:15*
2. *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy. 9:16*
3. *Pharaoh, was raised up to show God's power. God has mercy on whom he will and hardens who he will. 9:17-18*
4. *Can he still find fault under these circumstances and can people withstand such a will? 9:19*
5. *Who among formed things dare ask such a question. 9:20-21*
6. *When God must show his wrath who dare question the means he uses? 9:22*
7. *Is it not justified for God to spare a wicked man a short time longer to use him to help his purpose. 9:22*
8. *In this way God can show his wrath on those vessels who deserve it and his mercy on those vessels who deserve mercy. 9:23*
9. *In this way God can also make known the riches of his glory. 9:23*
10. *Those vessels of mercy are those who have been called by the gospel(Jew and Greek). 9:24*
11. *Hosea prophesied this. Through wickedness both made themselves not God's people. Now on equal footing they were called back 9:25-26*
12. *Isaiah made it very clear that no matter how large Israel was physically(as the sand of the sea), only a remnant would be saved. 9:27*
13. *God would now fulfill that prophesy quickly and completely. 9:28*
14. *Isaiah had also said that Israel would become like Sodom and Gomorrah but for the seed. Now the seed was being called out. 9:29*

What shall we say to all the above? What conclusions shall we now draw? If we are seeing the above properly, then the only spiritual and logical conclusion is:

**That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness,**

The term “that” sums up and gives the substance and contents of the question. This is the answer.

“*hoti...* I. the substance or contents (of a statement), *that*; 1. joined to verbs of saying and declaring... (Thayer p 458-460; 3754)

When God called Abraham out of Ur, he basically gave up the Gentiles as recorded in the first chapter of Romans.

*Wherefore **God gave them up** in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: 25 for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause **God gave them up** unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due. 28 And even as they refused to have God in (their) knowledge, **God gave them up** unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; Rom 1:24-28*

God gave them up. From the moment God gave them up, they did not “follow” righteousness.

“*dioko...* 1. to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away... 2. to run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing, to run after... to press on: fig. of one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal, 3. in any way whatever to harass, trouble, molest one; ... Pass. with a dat. denoting the cause, to be maltreated, suffer persecution on account of something ... 4. without the idea of hostility, to run after, follow after... 5. metaph. with acc. of thing, to pursue I. e. to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavor to acquire...” (Thayer, p. 153; 1377).

Though they did not “seek after eagerly, or earnestly endeavor to acquire” it, when God called them through the gospel they “attained” to it.

“*kata-lambano, ...* 1. to lay hold of so as to make one’s own, to obtain, attain to... to make one’s own, to take into one’s self, appropriate... 2. to seize upon, take possession of,... 4 to lay hold of with the mind; to understand, perceive, learn, comprehend...” (Thayer, p. 332; 2638).

They were not seeking for it, but when God offered it to them they made it their own, too to themselves and took possession of it. They were like the man who found the treasure hidden in the field.

*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: 46 and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Matt 13:44-46*

They had sold all that they had to buy that field. when they found it, they sold all they had to gain possession. The Gentiles attained to righteousness.

### **even the righteousness which is of faith:**

Lest anyone misunderstand, the theme of Romans is repeated. What they found was the righteousness which is “of” faith. Faith is the “ORIGIN, SOURCE, and CAUSE” of their righteousness.

“*ek...* It denotes as well exit or emission out of, as separation from, something with which there has been close connection; opp. to the preposition *eis* into and *en* in: *from out of, out from, forth from, from...* I. of PLACE,... II of the ORIGIN, SOURCE, CAUSE...” (Thayer, p. 189; 1537)

The Gentiles whose minds were not cluttered with the things the Jews held near and dear could more clearly grasp this message and hold to it.

### **31 but Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at (that) law.**

Israel who was worked with after the Gentiles were given up. From the time of Abraham on God revealed himself to them and made covenants with them. The law was given on Mt Sinai as a tutor to bring them to Christ.

*So that the law is become our tutor (to bring us) unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now faith that is come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26 For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:24-26*

God did everything he could to make them into vessels of mercy, but though they “followed” the

law,

*“dioko... 1. to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away... 2. to run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing, to run after... to press on: fig. of one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal, 3. in any way whatever to harass, trouble, molest one; ... Pass. with a dat. denoting the cause, to be maltreated, suffer persecution on account of something ... 4. without the idea of hostility, to run after, follow after... 5. metaph. with acc. of thing, to pursue i. e. to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavor to acquire...” (Thayer, p. 153; 1377).*

Though they pursued it and sought it eagerly, earnestly and endeavored to acquire it. Though they ran after it. They never “arrived.”

*“phthano... 1. to come before, precede, anticipate... 2... the idea of priority disappears, ... to come to, arrive at... to reach, attain to...” (Thayer, p. 652; 5348).*

They just never reached it. In spite of all God did for them, they lost it. The law become a stumbling block. Instead of making them humble because they could not perfectly keep it, and forcing them to lean on God in greater and greater faith, it made them proud because they had it and the Gentiles didn't. Instead of having Abraham as their father motivating them to be as trusting and faithful as he was, they trusted that physical tie and lived as they pleased. All God did to purify, cleanse and prepare them for the coming of the Messiah worked against them and they did not arrive where God had hoped to lead them. This was not God's fault, but their own. They did not arrive at what the law was intended to do for them.

### **32 Wherefore?**

Why!? How could such a thing happen?! Did God fail them, leave something undone that ought to have been done?! No, the problem was in their own heart.

**Because (they sought it) not by faith, but as it were by works.**

With another *“hoti/that”* he sums up the real problem They did not use faith as their *“ek/source origin & cause!”* This was the very heart of the problem which the Jews had fallen into. In spite of all that God had done to educate and help them, they totally and absolutely missed this point. All they saw in the law was works. They missed the faith of Abraham, and all his true children. They misunderstood the prophecies, took for granted God's loving care and gave back infidelity. They never cultivated faith and trust in God. They sought righteousness *“ek/source origin & cause”* from works.

**They stumbled at the stone of stumbling;**

Because of this they “stumbled” over the very stone that God had warned them might become a “stumbling stone” to them.

*“proskopto... to strike against... absol. : of those who strike against a stone or other obstacle in the path, to stumble ... to strike one's foot against a stone, i.e. (Dropping the fig.) to meet with some harm... to rush upon, to beat against ... to be made to stumble by a thing, that is, metaphorically, to be induced to sin...” (Thayer p. 547-548; 4350)*

*“proskomma... A stumbling-block... i.e an obstacle in the way which if one strike his foot against he necessarily stumbles or falls; trop that over which the soul stumbles, i.e. by which it is impelled to sin. Prop. A stone against which the foot strikes...” (Thayer, p. 547; 4348)*

### **33 even as it is written,**

*“kathos,...1. according as, just as, even as: in the first member of a comparison:...2. according as i.e. in proportion as, in the degree that:...3. since, seeing that, agreeably to the fact that.” (Thayer, p. 314; 2531).*

One final time in this chapter Paul quotes a prophecy offered to them 700 years before the Messiah came. A prophecy that could have warned them, changed their course, brought them to the proper place, but they had ignored it, misinterpreted it, or forgotten it.

*Jehovah of hosts, him shall ye sanctify; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 15 And many shall stumble thereon, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. Isa 8:13-15*

*therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious*

cornerstone) of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste. Isa 28:16

**Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence: And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame.**

When Jesus came, he asked of them only what God had always required but they had not done. When God sent Jesus only one of two possibilities opened. Jesus was too open, too clear, too demanding for anyone to remain neutral. They would all come to make a decision regarding him. If they were like Abraham, they would rejoice to see his day, follow and be saved. If they continued to do as they had always done, they would grow to hate him. To hate the Messiah would be the ultimate stumbling and offence. On Jesus all would hinge. God warned the rulers 700 years in advance. They did not listen and still were not listening. The destruction was soon to be unleashed against them. Neutrality was no longer possible. Consideration should also be given to Peter's comments on this same theme in 1 Pet 2:6-10.

*Because it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame. 7 For you therefore that believe is the preciousness: but for such as disbelieve, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner; 8 and, A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; for they stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. 9 But ye are a elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for (God's) own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: 10 who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 1 Pet 2:6-10*



## ROMANS 10:1-11

The tie to the previous chapter is a little more subtle, but still clearly obvious. He begins the chapter with pronouns whose antecedent nouns are found in the previous chapter. He uses “them” and “they” to describe those he introduced in the previous chapter as “my brethren” “my kinsmen according to the flesh,” “Israelites” and “Israel.” Everything said about them there now continues with the “they” and “them.” Since the thought continues, carefully review what has gone on before.

*Israel's present plight caused Paul great pain, but was not due to lack of blessings offered to them by God. 9:1-5*

*This did not bring God's word to nought, but perfectly fit in with the Scriptures, because from the very beginning they have revealed that not all who are of Israel or Israel and not all that are of Abraham's seed are children of the promise. 9:6-9*

*It was God's intent by using the twin sons of Jacob, to show that his purpose stands by his own sovereign choices and not by any merit on the part of the man. This leads to man's complete faith and trust in him. For it is all of him. 9:10-13*

*God has mercy and compassion based upon his own will, It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy. Pharaoh, was raised up to show God's power and reveal that God has mercy and hardens whom he will. 9:15-18*

*Can he still find fault under these circumstances and can people withstand such a will? Who among formed things dare ask such a question. When God must show his wrath who dare question the means he uses? Is it not justified for God to spare a wicked man a short time longer to use him to help his purpose. In this way God can show his wrath on those vessels who deserve it and his mercy on those vessels who deserve mercy. In this way God can also make known the riches of his glory. Those vessels of mercy are those who have been called by the gospel(Jew and Greek). 9:19-24*

*Prophets of the Old covenant, including Hosea and Isaiah had prophesied of this. Through wickedness both Jew and Gentile had made themselves not God's people and having no mercy. Now on equal footing they were both being called back. Isaiah had made it very clear that no matter how large physical Israel might be(even as the sand of the sea), only a remnant would be saved. God was then fulfilling this prophesy quickly and completely. Isaiah had also said that Israel would become like Sodom and Gomorrah but for the seed. Now the seed was being called out. 9:25-29*

*The chapter closes with an additional conclusion. The apostle Paul was even then God's instrument to fulfill his promise through the prophets. God cast off the Gentiles and chose Israel, God later cast off Israel. Now, on equal footing they were both being called back. But an amazing thing was occurring. The Gentiles who did not have the law and had not been following after righteousness had attained righteousness, while Israel, with the law and the tools for righteousness did not arrive where the Law was intended to bring them. The final thought of the chapter explains how this had occurred. The Jews had forgotten the value of faith. They had no learned the lesson God intended from their father Abraham. They were not seeking righteousness by faith but righteousness by works of merit. In so doing, they stumbled over the stone of stumbling(Jesus Christ). 9:30-33*

The direction now shifts somewhat. The Spirit will now elaborate on the efforts God has put forth to bring back his people. Jesus' apostles wanted the Jews to be saved. Even the great apostle of the Gentiles who had been severely mistreated by the Jews had no animosity or bitterness toward them. The problem centered on their zeal for God which refused to take into account the true facts. Their zeal was not according to knowledge. It was this zeal that had substituted their own method of righteousness for the one God had devised. They were their own worst enemy, for they were thwarting all God's efforts to save them. This chapter will continue the discussion of the Jewish rejection of Christ:

*Paul's heartfelt desire that they might be saved has been thwarted by an ignorant zeal that kept them from submitting to God's righteousness. 10:1-3*

*Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth and lives in that faith, 10:4-11*

*There is no distinction between Jew and Greek: the Lord is rich unto all who hear and call upon him: 10:12-17*

*But not everyone has believed what they have all had the opportunity to hear. 10:18*

*Even the jealousy God will provoke by calling the Gentiles has not had its intended effect yet. 10:19-21*

### **1 Brethren, my heart's desire**

Paul continues to open his heart to his Christian brethren about his feelings regarding his Jewish

brethren. Ponder again his highly charged words of the previous chapter:

*I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Rom 9:1-3*

This is the foundation of what he says here. His unceasing pain and great sorrow have led to a “desire” in his heart.

*“eudokia... 1. Unknown to prof. author. ... will, choice; ... in particular, good-will, kindly intent, benevolence; ... 2. delight, pleasure, satisfaction; ...3. desire(for delight in any absent thing easily begets a longing for it): Rom 10:1...” (Thayer, p. 258; 2107)*

The root idea of this term is a good(*eu*) thought(*dokia*) or a good desire. These are withheld due to the rebellion of the Jews, so it instead created a powerful desire in Paul’s heart to bring it about. Paul would have delight and pleasure if this were a reality so his heartfelt desire is to bring it into being. This is what all his previous dealings with them had led him to feel. Their rebellion and persecutions had not discouraged him in the least, nor had it made him bitter or with a desire for vengeance, instead it had created a powerful desire for their salvation and taking the necessary steps to fulfill it.

### **and my supplication to God is for them,**

Since such a powerful desire and intense longing must seek to find some means of fulfillment, Paul turned first to “supplication.”

*“deesis,... 1. need, indigence,... 2. a seeking, asking, entreating, entreaty... in the N. T. requests addressed by men to God... SYN deesis, proseuche, enteuxis: pr., ... is unrestricted as respects its contents, while d. is petitionary;... deesis gives prominence to the expression of personal need, proseuche to the element of devotion...” (Thayer, p. 126; 1162).*

Paul felt this need so strongly that he brought it to God. He pleaded with and entreated God for them. Paul felt their loss so keenly that he was working on the best possible methods for solving this terrible problem for them. All his prayers had one central focus:

### **that they may be saved.**

Paul uses “*eis/that*” to focus on what his hearts desire and his supplications to God were leading to.

*“eis,... after words indicating motion or direction or end; 3. it denotes the end; and a. the end to which a thing reaches or extends, i.e. measure or degree... b. the end which a thing is adapted to attain... c. the end which one has in view, i.e. object, purpose;... d. the end by which a thing is completed, i.e. the result or effect...” (Thayer, p. 183-186; 1519)*

The end result that Paul had in view for all his desires and his prayers is that they may be saved. This is all Paul wanted. It is what all the force of his being was directed toward.

## **2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God,**

With a *for/gar*, Paul now speaks of the reason and cause for his desire and supplication. He had personal knowledge and could “bear witness.”

*“martureo... to be a witness, to bear witness, testify, i.e. to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something, or that (so in the N. T.) he knows it because taught by direct revelation or inspiration....” (Thayer, p 390-391; 3140)*

Paul could give personal testimony on this subject for several reasons. First, because he had been raised up at the feet of Gamaliel in the city of Jerusalem and had lived among the strictest sect of the pharisees for most of his young life. Not long after penning this letter after being beaten by the Jews in Jerusalem and seeking to defend himself he offered this very testimony.

*I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as ye all are this day: 4 and I persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. Acts 22:3-4*

Paul understood better than anyone how a zeal for God could cause Jews to persecute Christianity.

The very anger that led to persecution flowed from their zeal.

*as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. Phil 3:6*

Paul knew well how the zeal for all that is right blended with ignorance could lead them to the terrible mistake they had made.

*For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it: 14 and I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. Gal 1:13-14*

*I thank him that enabled me, (even) Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to (his) service; 13 though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; 1 Tim 1:12-13*

The second reason why he could bear them witness centered on all his dealings with them since he began to preach. In all his journeys, in city after city, if they were not converted, they became his persecutors. Their zeal compelling them either to be converted or to seek to destroy him. Paul knew what motivated them to such persecution as few others could. He knew why they tried to kill him at Damascus, why they had tried to kill him in Jerusalem, why they drove him out of each city he preached in. For most, it was a misdirected “zeal” for God.

*“zelos... excitement of mind, ardor, fervor of spirit; 1. zeal, ardor in embracing, pursuing, defending anything... zeal in behalf of, for a person or thing... the fierceness of indignation, punitive zeal,... 2. an envious and contentious rivalry, jealousy...” (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 271; 2205)*

As one ponders this definition, it is clear that this is a compliment. The Jews had *ardor* and *fervor of spirit* when it came to God. Their faith and devotion toward God was of the highest caliber. Yet this very zeal was now hindering them from coming to Jesus.

This shows the great need for a love for the truth to take higher precedence than zeal in the life of any devoted servant of God. Zeal without knowledge kept these people from the truth, and ultimately cost them their souls. Devote children of God must take careful note of this. On the path that leads to life, zeal for God must be based upon the Scriptures and the truth.

Multitudes have been so blinded by their zeal that when God sent a prophet or preacher to reveal their mistake their own zeal kept them from listening and repenting. Misdirected zeal is spiritually fatal unless those who hold it can be directed by the truth.

### **but not according to knowledge.**

With the adversative “*alla*” the Spirit reveals the problem with the Jewish zeal. It was good, ***but*** because it was not according to knowledge, it would lead them to destruction. It has been awhile since the definition of *kata* has been cited:

*“kata,... II with the Accusative... 3. it denotes reference, relation, proportion, of various sorts; a. distributively, indicating a succession of things following one another... b... as respects; with regard to; in reference to; so far as relates to; as concerning;...c. according to, agreeably to; in reference to agreement or conformity to a standard, in various ways (aa) according to anything as a standard, agreeably to...(bb) in proportion to, according to the measure of...” (Thayer, p. 328; 2596)*

The balancing scales were unequal. Their zeal ardor, fire and intensity of purpose was not in proportion to the knowledge God had offered them. This is the problem with zeal. Once it has been directed upon a specific goal, it finds its greatest satisfaction in completing and fulfilling it. Seeking and assessing new information and creating a new goal are not as satisfying as simply focusing on the initial goal. But for those who know and love the truth such a course is seen to be folly. Only by continually reassessing zeal by knowledge can zeal be kept within its proper framework and used as a tool to lead to a greater goal. Zeal without knowledge must be recognized as a very dangerous thing. “Knowledge” must temper zeal.

*“epignosis...(epiginosko q.v.) precise and correct knowledge;... “epiginosko...to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly; to know accurately, know well... 2. to know... a. to recognize... to recognize a thing to be what it really is... b. to know I. q. to perceive... c. to know i.e. to find out, ascertain... d. to know i.e. to understand (Thayer, p. 237; 1922, 1921)*

Human zeal that does not first take the time to get a precise and correct understanding of the facts is guaranteed to lead off in the wrong direction.

*O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Jer 10:23*

Because these Jews did now have the ability to direct their own steps, yet in their zeal they had rejected the knowledge God had given them, they were in a terrible position. A position Paul was praying fervently and preaching boldly to help them overcome, but at that time had been mostly unsuccessful.

### **3 For being ignorant of God's righteousness,**

With another *for/gar*, the reason for their lack of knowledge is set forth. They were "ignorant."

*"agnoeo... a. to be ignorant, not to know;... b. not to understand c. to err, sin through mistake, spoken mildly of those who are not high-handed or wilful transgressors: (Thayer, p. 8; 50)*

*"agnoia ... want of knowledge, ignorance... (Thayer, p. 8; 56)*

Both of these terms make it clear that they were without knowledge. They simply were unaware of the facts and truths that they needed to know about God's righteousness. God's righteousness is in the same basic grammatical construction as it was earlier in the book, and is referring to exactly the same thing.

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith. Rom 1:16-17*

*But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; Rom 3:21-22*

These zealous Jews were ignorant that God would only make man righteous on the basis of faith in the gospel and faith in Jesus Christ. The Jews were ignorant and without knowledge of nearly everything the Holy Spirit had revealed up to this point in the book. Being ignorant of this crucial knowledge they were completely handicapped. There was nothing their zeal could do for them unless they gained it.

The sad reality is that they could have known! Their forefathers and prophets told them, Jesus told them and now the apostles and prophets were telling them. Yet the more they heard the truth, the more their zeal got in the way.

### **and seeking to establish their own,**

This was the heart of the problem. The Jews living in Paul's day were so zealously seeking for their own righteousness that they would not listen to the gospel. It did not fit into their system, so they rejected it. This is the problem with all false and counterfeit religion. The standards are created by man and then the followers zealously fulfill all the requirements. They are so self-satisfied with the results that when God sends them the truth, they are not even interested in it. There is never any excuse for doing such a thing, but this has not stopped multitudes from doing it. The Jews in wilful ignorance of God's Scriptures were "seeking to establish" their own" method of becoming righteous.

*"zeteo... 1. To seek in order to find; ... b. to seek [i.e. in order to find out] by thinking, meditating, reasoning; to inquire into;... c. to seek after, seek for, aim at, strive after... to seek i.e. desire, endeavor;... 2. To seek i.e. require, demand..." (Thayer, p. 272; 2212)*

*"histemi... to cause or make to stand; to place, put set; 1. univ... to bid to stand by... b. to make firm, fix, establish... to cause a person or thing to keep his or its place... to establish a thing, cause it to stand i.e. to uphold or sustain the authority or force of anything: Heb 10:9..." (Thayer, p. 307-308; 2476)*

*"idios... 1. pertaining to one's self, one's own; used a. univ. of what is one's own as opposed to belonging to another... to do one's own business (and not intermeddle with the affairs of others),... b. of what pertains to one's property, family, dwelling, country, etc. ... c. harmonizing with, or suitable or assigned to, one's nature, character, aims, acts; appropriate... 2. private..." (Thayer, p. 296-297; 2398)*

Once a new system has been established, those who are zealous and have reached important levels within it find it difficult to leave what they have attained. This is exactly what Paul had been forced to do. He was one of the few who did so.

*for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh: 4 though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. 7 Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, Phil 3:3-8*

### **they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.**

By the time Jesus came, these people had sunk into a low position. Jesus spent much of his ministry berating this system and those who were holding it up. He demanded repentance and repudiation of their own system of righteousness. The apostles went out into all the world to preach the same thing. But the Jews would not “subject” themselves to it.

*“hupotasso... to arrange under, to subordinate; to subject, put in subjection... mid. to subject one’s self, to obey; to submit to one’s control; to yield to one’s admonition or advice... to obey [R.V. subject one’s self...] ... obey, be subject ...” (Thayer, p. 645; 5293)*

The Jews were so confused and so ignorant, so totally under the control of their own misguided zeal and misunderstanding that when God made them the offer of salvation and righteousness through faith in Jesus they refused it!! God demanded that they believe in the Christ he had promised to send. He required them to repent of their sin, confess of their faith and allegiance to Jesus, and be baptized into a new life. They refused to yield, obey or submit to it. Once again the “righteousness of God” refers to the good news(gospel) that God would make man righteous by believing and obeying the gospel. Though he had preached this all the way back in the garden of Eden and later to Abraham, the Jews would not submit to it.

### **4 For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness**

With another *for/gar* Paul explains the reason and cause of a statement made in the previous verse. The Jews would not submit to the righteousness of God. Because Christ is the end of that law to righteousness and the Jews would not submit to him. How is Christ the “end” of the law?

*“telos,... 1. end, i.e. a. termination, the limit at which a thing ceases to be... b. the end i.e. the last in any succession or series... c. that by which a thing is finished, its close, issue... d... the end to which all things relate, the aim, purpose I Tim. 1:5...” (Thayer, p. 619-620; 5056)*

Because of the different meanings of the term “end” there is some ambiguity regarding Paul’s meaning here. Whenever this occurs, it is wise to compare it with other Scriptures to be certain we are not modifying the true meaning.

1. The aim and purpose of the law was Christ. It was a schoolmaster to bring they Jews us Christ. Christ. Christ was the aim and purpose for God’s giving the law.

*But before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 So that the law is become our tutor (to bring us) unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now faith that is come, we are no longer under a tutor. Gal 3:23-25*

2. Christ brought the law to an end. When he died on the cross it was finished.

*And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, (I say), did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses; 14 having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out that way, nailing it to the cross; 15 having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. 16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: 17 which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ’s. Col 2:13-17*

*Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech, 13 and (are) not as Moses, (who) put a veil upon his face, that the children of Israel should not look stedfastly on the end of that which was passing away: 14 but their minds were hardened: for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remaineth, it not*

being revealed (to them) that it is done away in Christ. 15 But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart. 16 But whensoever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 2 Cor 3:12-16

3. Christ perfected that which the law intended to do. The law was given to help make man righteousness, but it failed because man could not keep it. Hence Christ brought to fruition and completion that which the law could not do because man could not keep it. Christ purchased the righteousness of perfect obedience to law for us upon the cross. As a result of what he did and our belief in him we are now all that the law intended for us to be.

*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom 8:2-4*

Since all of the above are scriptural, any of them could be Paul's meaning here. But the third one seems to fit the context best. The main reason for this centers on two considerations. The first is the term "unto" in the phrase unto righteousness. It is "eis - purpose, end, goal aim" Christ is the end of the Law for the purpose aim and goal of righteousness. This is the righteousness of God(how God makes man righteous) that the Jews would not submit to. They wanted to keep the law. But Jesus Christ frees us from that law of sin and death and brings us instead to the perfect law of liberty where each one who accepts righteousness by faith is all that the law was designed to make him. This is the second reason why this one best fits the context. This is accomplished:

**unto righteousness to every one that believeth.**

Only to those who believe is Christ the end of the law. This is very similar to what Paul had stated at the beginning of the book(1:16-17).

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith.*

Carefully ponder the similarities of these two verses.

<b>the gospel is</b>	<b>the power</b>	<b>of God</b>	<b>unto(eis) salvation</b>	<b>to everyone who believeth</b>
<b>Christ is</b>	<b>the end</b>	<b>of the law</b>	<b>unto (eis) righteousness</b>	<b>to everyone who believeth</b>

Just as the gospel has become God's power for the purpose of offering and giving salvation to every single individual who believes it, in exactly the same way Jesus Christ becomes the end and completion of the law's purpose to make man righteous to every single person who believes. Righteousness could never come through the law. Only the God's righteousness offered through faith and paid for by Jesus could offer it.

*But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; 24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 whom God set forth (to be) a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; 26 for the showing, (I say), of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus. Rom 3:21-26*

*For not through the law was the promise to Abraham or to his seed that he should be heir of the world, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if they that are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect: 15 for the law worketh wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there transgression. 16 For this cause (it is) of faith, that (it may be) according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all Rom 4:13-16*

Those who never violate the law are perfect and sinless. So are those who obey the gospel. Those who never violate the law will go to heaven to live eternally. So will those who believe in Jesus. There is nothing the law could have given to us that faith in Jesus cannot also bring. Hence in every sense of the term Christ is the end of the law, the goal of perfection for which the law was given is

now given by God to all who trust Jesus Christ.

## **5 For Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby.**

With the fourth *gar/for* in as many verses the Spirit offers this quotation as proof and elaboration of the previous thought. The Spirit through Moses said exactly the same thing in Leviticus that the Spirit through Paul has just finished saying here in Romans.

*And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am Jehovah your God. 3 After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their statutes. 4 Mine ordinances shall ye do, and my statutes shall ye keep, to walk therein: I am Jehovah your God. 5 Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and mine ordinances; which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am Jehovah. Lev 18:1-5*

Moses was admonishing Israel to keep the law they had been given on Sinai. He reminded them that Jehovah was their God and He expected them to live above the vile level of existence they had seen the Egyptians living and would soon see in those living in Canaan. His standards were the true standards of life. This law was the way man was designed to live and God expected them to fulfill their standards. He demanded that they keep all his laws and all his ordinances. Just before he begins to list these ordinances and statutes, God makes the statement quoted here by Paul.

Those who do these statutes and ordinances will live in them. Since most of the statutes and ordinances that follow have a death penalty assigned to them, it appears in the context that physical life and death are under consideration. A man must do God's statutes and God's ordinances. If he does them then he lives in them. If he violates them, then he dies in them. This is why Paul calls this law the ministration of death and the ministration of condemnation:

*who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 7 But if the ministration of death, written, (and) engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look stedfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which (glory) was passing away: 8 how shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory? 9 For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. 2 Cor 3:6-19*

This was the true nature of the Law Israel was still clinging to. It was a law that if one kept it was a ministration of life, but since none of them could keep it, it became a ministration of death. For a time, God allowed the blood of bulls and goats to temporarily suspend many of these penalties and offer forgiveness, but once Christ came, all the grace that had been in that law was removed and what remained could only condemn and bring death.

*10 as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none that understandeth, There is none that seeketh after God; 12 They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; There is none that doeth good, no, not, so much as one: . . . 19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God: 20 because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law (cometh) the knowledge of sin. Rom 3:10-11, 19-20.*

Those who wanted to be righteous as Israel in the days of Paul claimed were doomed to fail. They could not do it this way! They had to "do the righteousness that was of the law" if they wanted to live under the law. But they had already failed to do it. It was a hopeless case for them and this is what Romans is written to prove.

Only Jesus Christ could take those who were under the law and make them righteous through faith. Christ was therefore the end and fulfillment to that law. The fact that the Jews were rejecting their Messiah only revealed their arrogance and lack of understanding of the law. The very fact that the law had animal sacrifices should have proved to those under the Law that they could not keep it. The death of each animal for their sins was designed by God to create humility, contrition and faith.

*For all these things hath my hand made, and (so) all these things came to be, saith Jehovah: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word. Isa 66:2*

*Jehovah is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but Jehovah delivereth him out of them all. Ps 34:18-19*

*For thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering. 17 The sacrifices*

of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Ps 51:16-17

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite. Isa 57:15

Before the coming of Christ, those living under the law with the above demeanor were righteous. But not through the law! The law's righteousness only came through living it. No one had ever been made righteous by keeping the law! They had been made righteous through faith in God's mercy and compassion and his promise that he would find the means of forgiveness.

Now that the means of forgiveness had come and all God's promises had been fulfilled those who accept Jesus are being encouraged by the words of Moses, and those Jews who have rejected the Christ are shown that even Moses revealed that their only hope was to keep the law perfectly and not seek for grace. This though continues in the next few verses.

## **6 But the righteousness which is of faith saith thus,**

Paul now compares what Moses said of the righteousness which comes from the Law with what the Spirit now says of the righteousness which comes as a result of faith in Jesus. Moses had said that a man who wanted righteousness from the law must live up to the ordinances, The "righteousness of which is of faith" has been the theme of Romans since 1:16. From the fall in the Garden of Eden up to the present moment that Paul is writing, God had always intended that Jesus would die on the cross and man would be saved by faith. It was the only way he could be just and still justify those who were in sin. Those who have accepted Jesus Christ are now in exactly the same position as those who had received the Law on Mt Sinai. Those who have been justified by faith and now possess the righteousness which is of faith speak exactly the same way about Jesus as Moses did about the law. Moses reminded Israel that God has done all the hard work for them. He had brought them the law and left it as close as it could possibly be left. It was nigh unto them, in their mouth and heart. All they had to do was do it.

*For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? 14 But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. 15 See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; 16 in that I command thee this day to love Jehovah thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, that thou mayest live and multiply, and that Jehovah thy God may bless thee in the land whither thou goest in to possess it. Deut 30:11-16*

Once this is seen in its original setting, the play on words here is powerful and much easier to understand. Yet one other things must not be lost sight of. This passage is offered immediately after the prophecy that reveals they will suffer all the curses written in the law, be cast off and scattered into all the nations. While there, God will gather them, which is exactly what Paul and the other apostles had been sent forth to do.

*And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither Jehovah thy God hath driven thee, 2 and shalt return unto Jehovah thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul; 3 that then Jehovah thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples, whither Jehovah thy God hath scattered thee. 4 If (any of) thine outcasts be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will Jehovah thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: 5 and Jehovah thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. 6 And Jehovah thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. 7 And Jehovah thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, that persecuted thee. 8 And thou shalt return and obey the voice of Jehovah, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day. 9 And Jehovah thy God will make thee plenteous in all the work of thy hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, for good: for Jehovah will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers; 10 if thou shalt obey the voice of Jehovah thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law; if thou turn unto Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. Deut 30:1-10*

It would be hoped that by using the first passage in Deuteronomy Israel might be reminded of the

other as well. Jehovah still wants to circumcise their hearts, and do them good.

### **Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:)**

*It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? Deut 10:12*

We have to keep in mind that this verse is a part of the explanation and elaboration of Romans 10:4. "Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness unto everyone who believeth." Those living after Christ's death upon the cross do not have to say within their heart who will go up into heaven and get the Christ and bring him down to earth to fulfill God's promises to his people. Just as God brought the law to Israel, he has now brought the Christ. The righteousness of faith already proclaims that Christ has come, brought us salvation and returned back into heaven. Hence the righteousness of faith does not have some impossible feat standing in the way and hindering our belief. We do not have to ascend up into heaven and beseech Christ to come down and die for our sins. He has already done so. The only difficulty left is getting people to believe it.

### **7 or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (That is, to bring Christ up from the dead.)**

*Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? Deut 10:13*

This is the second difficult thing. It is easy to see that this one is more difficult than the comparison given to Israel to receive their law. Israel only needed to cross to sea while the righteousness of faith requires one to go into the abyss(Hades). Christ has already done all this. His death, burial, and resurrection are accomplished facts(I Cor. 15:1-3). No one need be concerned with the impossible task of raising Jesus from the dead, and bringing him up out of the abyss. That too has already been accomplished and the only difficult task remaining is to believe it.

### **8 But what saith it?**

Having shown what the gospel says we do not have to concern ourselves with it now moves on to that which one ought to concern themselves with.

### **The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart:**

*But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. Deut 10:14*

Just like the Old Law it replaced, the word of the gospel is also nigh to all. The good news that Christ did descend out of heaven, and that Christ did ascend out of the abyss, that Christ is even now at the right hand of God exalted. Where is that word? It is close to you, in your mouth and in your heart. We only have to believe.

*Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; 8 and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient (even) unto death, yea, the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; 10 that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of (things) in heaven and (things) on earth and (things) under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2:5-11*

*Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, And gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now this, He ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) Eph 4:8-10*

The gospel has all been accomplished. Everything necessary for salvation has been accomplished. It is now the power of God to all who believe.

### **that is, the word of faith, which we preach:**

Paul now explains that the righteousness of faith and the word which is nigh is in reality the word of faith which the apostles of the first century were both revealing and preaching. It is the gospel, the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. That word is close to all. He now goes on to explain just how close it is to every sinner on earth.

## **9 because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus (as) Lord,**

This is how close it actually is. All one must do is confess that Jesus is Lord with their mouth and believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead and they will be saved. It just cannot be made any nearer and any closer than this. Jesus has left heaven and come to earth. He has died for our sins and his soul has entered Hades. He has been raised from the dead and returned back to heaven and is now sitting at the right hand of God exalted. All of these hard things have been done. What is left? Paul has already discussed belief(1:16-17; 10:4,9-10), repentance(Rom 2:4), baptism(Rom 6:3-4) all that is left is hearing(10:17) and confession(10:9-10). This is how close it all is now. God has commanded that his word go into all the world and be preached to every creature(Mk 16:15-16). It is all so close now. There is nothing on God's end left to be done. It is all up to man. God has proclaimed that he wants all to be saved and is longsuffering not wishing for any to perish.

*This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4 who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim 2:3-4*

*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 2 Pet 3:9*

He must "confess" Jesus as Lord.

*"homologeo... 1. prop. to say the same thing as another, i. e. to agree with, assent, both absol. and with a dat. of the pers. 2. univ. to concede i.e. a. not to refuse, i. e. to promise... b. not to deny, i.e. to confess; declare... 3. to profess... i.e. to declare openly, speak out freely, [A. V. generally confess;...]..." (Thayer, p. 446; 3670)*

Confessing Jesus as Lord takes in a lot more territory than a simple movement of lips. When one states that Jesus is Lord, he is binding upon himself all that the Lord has said. He is "agreeing" and "assenting" and "promising" that Jesus is Lord. Jesus was very forceful about this during his earthly ministry.

*Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. 33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven. Matt 10:32-33*

*And I say unto you, Every one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: 9 but he that denieth me in the presence of men shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God. Luke 12:8-9*

The reason and rational behind this request is seen in what the Jewish leaders had decided to do if anyone did confess Jesus as the Christ.

*These things said his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man should confess him (to be) Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. John 9:22*

*Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess (it), lest they should be put out of the synagogue: 43 for they loved the glory (that is) of men more than the glory (that is) of God. John 12:42-43*

Confession is important because it stresses allegiance, loyalty and submission. If one only believes but refuses to confess it, then their belief is flawed and weak. Jesus demands complete loyalty that will set him above all others, and that will submit to him even in the most difficult of areas.

*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Luke 6:46*

When one acknowledges that Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth, he must follow through with obedience to him or the confession is meaningless. Luke made it very clear that the confession must come prior to baptism.

*And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, (here is) water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37 (And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.) 38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing. Acts 8:36-39*

**and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved:**

The resurrection is no mere secondary doctrine of faith. It is the foundation. It is the critical proof that proves Jesus to be who he said he was. Those in Paul's day who believed that in their heart were not going to shrink back at the other doctrines. This is why Paul could write this. Again this is how close the word is to each one of us. It can work its power upon us simply by belief in the resurrection and a confession that Jesus is Lord that carries through with obedience to all that Jesus commands.

### **10 for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness;**

With a *for/gar* the reason or cause of the previous verse or thought is elaborated upon. This is the righteousness which is of faith. God has ordained that man within his own heart can believe, and that it is through his belief that he enters into(*eis*) righteousness. Though man cannot earn righteousness through perfect works, God can still give it to him upon the basis of faith. When a persons heart fills with faith, and that faith causes him to act(James 2:14ff) then and only then does perfect righteousness flow from the throne of God's grace into the heart and soul of the believer in the manner described in chapter six through the act of baptism.

### **and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

Faith must be strong enough to make itself known. Why confession is exclusively discussed here while repentance(2:4) and baptism(6:1-8) are left out is difficult to explain. The most likely explanation within the context of this chapter would be that the animosity and anger that a Israelite or Gentile would face would come at the point of confession. Faith and repentance are internal, while confession and baptism are external. Confession is the first point where faith sees the light of day, and confession is the acknowledgment that every other subsequent command will be obeyed. Salvation is therefore entered into at the point of true confession, because true confession will not shirk baptism, where one is joined with Christ and given remission of sins.

Confession was the flashpoint for that day and age, and therefore was the point at which faith came out into the open in a powerful way. It was therefore the point of difficulty, since confession meant commitment and commitment meant ostracization. Once one confessed in that age it was not difficult to get them into the water of baptism. That was the natural next step which all took. The problem of that age was that even after belief some refused to confess it through fear. Hence Paul's admonition that it must be a strong enough faith to publicly commit itself.

### **11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be put to shame.**

With another *for/gar* the Spirit quotes a passage from the OT that revealed the power of faith to elaborate and establish the truth of the previous statement. Man is indeed made righteous by faith and confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The last chapter had closed with this same verse. There it was used to show why all who disbelieved would fall, here it is being used to show why all who believe will be saved.

*therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone) of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste. Isa 28:16*

Jesus was to be the tried and precious cornerstone. God would place him as the foundation of the temple. Those who believed that he was of God would not be in haste(or ashamed). Peter elaborated upon this concept to give us a fuller idea of all that is involved.

*unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, 5 ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Because it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame. 7 For you therefore that believe is the preciousness: but for such as disbelieve, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner; 8 and, A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; for they stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. 1 Pet 2:4-8*

Those who believe that Jesus is the elect and precious chief cornerstone are built up a spiritual house and become a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices to the Lord. All who believe that Jesus is Lord and who confess it with their mouths will never be put to shame.

On the judgment day, those who have put their hope in men will be put to shame. Those who have followed Mohammed, Confucius, or Buddha will be put to shame. God never called these men and allegiance to them will not save.

*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14:6*

Only those who confess Jesus and follow his hand chosen apostles will not be put to shame. All who are led aside by false prophets into doing that which Jesus did not ordain as being from the Father will also be put to shame.

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Matt 7:21-23*

Those who believe and confess the Pope, Joseph Smith, Martin Luther or John Calvin, will be put to shame. Only those who put their faith totally and completely upon the rock Jesus Christ will not be put to shame. When the judgment day dawn, they will be honored by both the Father and the Son.



## ROMANS 10:12-21

### 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek:

With another *for/gar* the explanation and elaboration of the thoughts in the previous verses continues. Take a moment to see the entire train of thought:

- 1 Though the Jews had a zeal for God it was not in proportion to what God had revealed about righteousness. Though they sought to establish their own righteousness based upon the works of the law, they were doomed to failure since it led them ever further from God's method of making man righteous through faith. 10:1-3
2. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Law's intent and completes the law's ordinances in each person who believes in him. Even Moses had said that the righteousness that the law could produce was only available to those who lived up to the law, which no Jew had ever accomplished. 10:4-5; 2:3:10-20;
3. The righteousness of faith says that Christ has come down from heaven, gone into the abyss, and came back from the dead. God has done all that he promised to do for man and that word is now in the mouths and hearts of all. This word is the gospel being preached by Jesus' disciples. 10:6-8
4. At that present moment, it was so close to all of them that the only thing lacking was faith in his resurrection and an allegiance to his Lordship which was manifested by their confession. These two things would bring both righteousness and salvation. This is validated by the Scripture that said that whosoever believes on him will not be put to shame. 10:9-11

With these four things clearly in mind, this next clause explains and gives additional proof that they are true. The distinction between the Jew and the Gentile which the law had created had now been removed by Jesus Christ. God no longer saw a Jew/Gentile or chosen people/cast off people "distinction."

*diastole*... signifies a setting asunder (*dia*, asunder, *stello*, to set, place, arrange), hence, a distinction; in Rom. 3:22 and 10:12, KJV, "difference;" RV, "distinction;" in 1 Cor. 14:7 it is used of the distinction in musical sounds. (Vine's Vol 1 p. 310)

After Jesus death upon the cross, there was no longer anything left to set, place or arrange the Jew and the Gentile into categories. The things that had created a difference between them had been removed. Since God could no longer see any difference, there was no difference.

*Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; 12 that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, 15 having abolished in the flesh the enmity, (even) the law of commandments (contained) in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, (so) making peace; 16 and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 and he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh: 18 for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father. Eph 2:11-17*

After the crucifixion, both Jew and Gentile were on equal footing, both in Christ and outside of Christ. Outside of Christ, both Jew and Gentile were sinners, stood equally rejected, and in equal need of the gospel. Once they have obeyed the gospel and been baptized into Christ, both Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God through the cross, and there is no distinction.

*For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. 28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one (man) in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise. Gal 3:26-29*

The only thing that ever separated the Jew from the Gentile was God's election through the fathers. The law for a time validated that separation into two distinct classes. After the law was removed, there was no longer anything upon which to base a distinction. Both in and out of Christ, all are equal now.

### for the same (Lord) is Lord of all,

With another *for/gar* an additional thought is added to explain and strengthen the idea that there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. Since Jesus is the Lord of all, and offers the same terms

of pardon to all, how could there be any distinction in the church or out of it? This is exactly what Peter saw when he was sent by the Spirit to the house of Cornelius and heard Cornelius' explanation of God's dealings with him.

*And Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him. 36 The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all.) Acts 10:34-36*

It is also in this verse that the question of whether the Lord here refers to the Father or the Son is answered.

Throughout the Old Testament scriptures, Jehovah was called the Lord. In the New Testament, only the context can give us the absolute answer. In some Scriptures the designation Lord obviously refers to the Father.

*Jesus said unto him, Again it is written, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God. 8 Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; 9 and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. 10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Mt 4:7-10*

*At that season Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: Matt 11:25*

*Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me. To him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. Acts 3:22*

*And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, O Lord, thou that didst make the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: 25 who by the Holy Spirit, (by) the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say, Why did the Gentiles rage, And the peoples imagine vain things? 26 The kings of the earth set themselves in array, And the rulers were gathered together, Against the Lord, and against his Anointed: 27 for of a truth in this city against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, 28 to do whatsoever thy hand and thy council foreordained to come to pass. 29 And now, Lord, look upon their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, 30 while thy stretchest forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of thy holy Servant Jesus. Acts 4:24-31*

In other places the term Lord obviously refers to Jesus.

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Matt 7:21*

*But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake. 17 And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, (even) Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 9:15-17*

*yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him. 1 Cor 8:6*

*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all. 1 Cor 12:4-6*

There are even passages where the Father and the Son are both called Lord in the same verse.

*For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 35 Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet. 36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both*

*Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. Acts 2:34-41*

But often only the context can really tell us whether the designation Lord is to be applied to the Father or to Jesus.

Here, there is no doubt that Jesus is Lord. Jesus is the Lord of the Jews and the Lord of the Gentiles. We will all confess this, either here to our salvation, or at the judgment throne when it is too late.

*Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; 10 that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of (things) in heaven and (things) on earth and (things) under the earth,*

11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil 2:9-11

There simply is no salvation in any other name.

*He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. 12 And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved. Acts 4:11-12*

**and is rich unto all that call upon him:**

Jesus is rich unto(*eis / entering into*) all that call upon him. whether one is Jew or Gentile has no bearing. All who call upon him he shows himself to be rich toward. The term "rich" is defined.

*"plouto... a. to be rich, to have abundance; prop. of outward possessions, b. metaph. to be richly supplied... affluent in resources..." (Thayer, p. 519; 4147)*

Jesus is rich in mercy and compassion, rich in kindness and love. In every aspect of life Jesus possesses a wealth that he wants to give to all who will call upon him.

**13. for, Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**

With another *for/gar* Paul continues and elaborates upon the idea of calling upon the name of the Lord. Peter used this same Old Testament passage in the first sermon ever preached, and attributed it to Joel.

*but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel: 17 And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams: 18 Yea and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days Will I pour forth of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show wonders in the heaven above, And signs on the earth beneath; Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the day of the Lord come, That great and notable (day). 21 And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Acts 2:16-21*

What Joel actually said illustrates the material we discussed above about when Lord refers to Jesus and when it refers to the Father.

*And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah doth call. Joel 2:32*

The Holy Spirit through both Peter and Paul reveals that the Jehovah(I AM that I AM) being referred to was actually Jesus. This should not surprise us as Jesus had said as much while here.

*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am. John 8:58*

Jesus is the Lord upon whom we must call if we are to be saved. God had promised this in Joel and began to fulfill it in the first sermon Peter preached in Acts 2. After Peter proved that God had made him both Lord and Christ they began to call, later Ananias told Paul to do the same thing.

*Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. 37 Now when they heard (this,) they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? 38 And Peter (said) unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, (even) as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. Acts 2:36-39*

*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name. Acts 22:16*

Hence calling on his name is not simply a verbal calling, but a yearning of the soul for his Lordship over their lives and the blessings that flow from it. Jesus made this clear while he was here.

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Mt 7:21*

*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Lk 6:46*

**14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?**

Among the various commentaries there is much more interest and variety of opinion regarding why this passage is here than there is in what it means. Probably because what it means is obvious and

why Paul here speaks the obvious is much more difficult to determine. What is the flow of thinking that led the Spirit to place these five inverted questions which establish the steps necessary for someone to be saved by calling on the name of the Lord? The goal is to get them to call(5), but before they can call them must first believe(4), before they can believe they must hear(3), but they will never hear if someone does not preach(2), and no one is going to preach unless they are sent(1).

Unfortunately, though there are many creative ideas set forth as the reason for this, no one seems to be able to agree. Some see this as a Jewish objection that Paul has brought up in order to remove it(Barnes), others that Paul is affirming his universal apostolate(Godet), or the Jews own guilt for their exclusion(Meyer). I must confess I cannot come up with a clear, compelling or obvious reason, but as these men, feel that the verse does create a need for an explanation. Perhaps this is nothing more than an echo of Deuteronomy 30, forcing the readers to see just how much God has done and how little is left for them to do:

*For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? 13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? 14 But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. Deut 30:11-14*

*How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things! Rom 10:14-15*

The fact is that God has taken care of all these obstacles just as he did for the Jews. Any one of these things could keep one from calling on the name of the Lord, but God has foreseen these barriers and has resolved each of them.

The obvious answer to this first question is that thy cannot. No one can call upon the Lord if they do not believe in him. But the Lord took care of that. The first sermon in Acts as well as all subsequent sermons are filled with the things that are necessary to cause belief. Miracles, prophecy, logic and truth are masterfully combined to create faith. God has done everything possible and placed great power to create faith. His everlasting power and divinity cry out from the heavens, and are so powerful that God himself proclaims that those who do not believe have no excuse for their unbelief. While the evidence of Jesus deity is so great that John says those who do not believe it are making God a liar.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; 19 because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, (even) his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: Rom 1:18-20*

*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son. 10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. 11 And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He that hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life. 1 Jn 5:9-12*

It is true that no one can call if they do not believe, but reasons to believe have been abundantly supplied by the Lord and are all around us.

### **and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?**

This too is a grave obstacle to salvation. If people do not have the opportunity to hear all the proofs and evidence that God has devised then they cannot believe. But God has taken care of this as well. Through his great omnipotent and omniscient power, no seeker of truth will ever be left without an opportunity to hear.

*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 9 Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; 10 or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your*

*Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Matt 7:7-11*

Throughout the book of Acts this is illustrated. The Ethiopian eunuch, Saul and Cornelius were all given “miraculous” opportunities to hear. God had promised long ago that no matter where his people were scattered, he would call them back.

*that then Jehovah thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples, whither Jehovah thy God hath scattered thee. 4 If (any of) thine outcasts be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will Jehovah thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: Deut 30:3-4*

Everyone who wants to hear and has a desire to serve God will hear.

### **and how shall they hear without a preacher?**

Even with the written word, the Eunuch made the same point.

*And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 31 And he said, How can I, except some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him. Acts 8:30-31*

Even more was this true during the early days of the gospel when the good news was only in the hearts and minds of those whom the Holy Spirit was even then guiding into all the truth.

*But the Comforter, (even) the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you. John 14:26*

*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, (these) shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. John 16:13*

Without preachers far fewer people would hear, believe and call upon the name of the Lord. But once again God was prepared and knew this to be the case. He has covered and taken care of all these needs.

### **15 and how shall they preach, except they be sent?**

Once again a potential roadblock is averted. Though there will always be some Jonah’s who will refuse the task, this has been built into the gospel as a foundation principle of agape love. Jesus gave the great commission and its specific fulfillment to the apostles, but the apostles passed it on to all disciples.

*And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: 20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Mt 28:18-20*

*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned. Mark 16:15-16*

*But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Acts 1:8*

*Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. 6 Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one. Col 4:5-6*

*but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: (being) ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear: 1 Pet 3:15*

Through these and many other Scriptures God has foreseen this need and taken care of it. Some will stumble upon it as a treasure hidden in a field while others will find it after a careful search. But all who are asking, seeking and knocking will be blessed.

*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. 45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: 46 and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Mt 13:44-46*

Peter would not go to Cornelius until he was told to go(Acts 10). Paul and Barnabas did not go on the first missionary journey until they were told by the Holy Spirit to go(Acts 13). Paul did not go into Macedonia until he was given a vision to do so. All his efforts were directed by the divine decree

of God. Because God wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth(I Tim 2:3-4).  
**even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!**

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Isa 52:7*

This prophecy described the time of deliverance which God would give to those who were living after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. This prophecy focuses on the beauty of the feet of those who had been sent out by God to proclaim the good tidings and publish salvation. It is the wonderful nature of this news that would cause the people to view them as people with beautiful feet.

One cannot in all fairness overlook the position of this prophecy in Isaiah. It is only six verses before the great prophecy of the suffering servant who would bring salvation to God's people by his own death at the hands of the Jews.

*Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. 14 Like as many were astonished at thee (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men), 15 so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand. 1 Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who (among them) considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke (was due)? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see (his) seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, (and) shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Isa 52:13-15; 53:1-12*

It is hard to imagine any Jew reading this part of Romans who would not be pricked in his heart as he realized the implications of this verse. According to this verse, Paul and the other apostles should have been welcomed with joy and gladness at their proclamation that the Messiah was now reigning on his throne and God's plans had all come to pass. The sad reality is that this is not at all how they were welcomed. But it was not God's fault.

## **16 But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings.**

With the adversative *alla*, the Spirit reveals the sad reality. The prophecy had been fulfilled, the feet were beautiful, the news was good, God had done everything possible but the recipients would not all "hearken."

*"hupakouo... to listen, hearken; 1. prop: of one who on a knock at the door comes to listen who it is, (the duty of the porter)... 2. to hearken to a command, i.e. to obey, be obedient unto, submit to..." (Thayer, p. 638; 5219)*

Though there was some success in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria, not all hearkened to the gospel. They listened, but this did not obey or submit. Saul himself had laid waste the church and scattered the disciples from Jerusalem. Yet after his conversion, any illusions he might have had that because of his former position he could persuade them to believe(Acts 22:17-21) had long ago been laid to rest. His first, second, and most of his third missionary journeys were all behind him by the time he wrote this letter. Though Acts had not yet been written his life up through Chapter

Eighteen had already been lived. The reaction of the Jews to his preaching in various locations is a sad commentary on this verse. Their attempts to kill him at Damascus, their violent reaction to his preaching in Antioch of Pisidia, their rejection at Iconium and then stoning him at Lystra. Their reaction at Thessalonica and Berea, and at Corinth. Painful indeed was the truth of Israel's rejection of the feet of those who brought the glad tidings to them. But though painful, and even hard to believe, it was not unforeseen. Isaiah prophesied it id had already recorded that unbelief before he even uttered the prophecy that contained the truth.

### **For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?**

With a *for/gar*, the Spirit gives the reason and ground for the above statement. They did not all hearken for Isaiah said that they would not(Isa 53:1). From long experience with the Jewish people, God already knew what the attitude and disposition of the generation living in the time of Jesus would be. He knew that who Jesus was and what Jesus would demand of them would be more than they could bear. He knew they would kill him, and he knew that the majority would reject the gospel.

He warned them before it ever happened so that when it came to pass, it should not be a marvel or cause of difficulty for those who did believe.

### **17 So belief (cometh) of hearing,**

The Spirit begins with a particle of conclusion that *"intimates that 'under these circumstances something either is so or becomes so'"*.

*"ara... an illative particle(akin, as it seems, to the verbal root aro to join, to be fitted...) ... It intimates that, "under these circumstances something either is so or becomes so"... consequently ... 2. ... it is placed at the beginning of a sentence; and so, so then, accordingly,... (Thayer, p. 71; 686)*

Because God did so much to bring about faith, but not everyone would listen or obey, something now becomes so. God has done everything else. He has brought Christ and created the power of the gospel. He has given the evidence for faith, given the opportunities to hear and sent out the preachers. But the point of connection occurs in the heart of the one who is present when the message is proclaimed. "Faith" comes of hearing.

*"pistis... faith; l. e. 1. conviction of the truth of anything, belief... in the N.T. of a conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and conjoined with it... a. when it relates to God, pistis is the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ... b. in reference to Christ, it denotes a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God... c. univ. the religious belief of Christians; d. with the predominant idea of trust(or confidence) whether in God or in Christ, springing from faith in the same... 2. fidelity, faithfulness, .i.e the character of one who can be relied on..." (Thayer, p. 512-414; 4102)*

No one can become convicted, trust or place confidence in Jesus unless they are willing to hear. All faith comes "of" hearing

*"ek... It denotes as well exit or emission out of, as separation from, something with which there has been close connection; opp. to the preposition eis into and en in: from out of, out from, forth from, from... II of the ORIGIN, SOURCE, CAUSE; 1. Of generation, birth, race, lineage, nativity... 2. of any other kind or origin... 5... is used of the cause (whether thing or person) by which the act expressed by the accompanying verb is aided, sustained, effected... 6. of that one which a thing depends or from which it results... 7. of the power on which any one depends, by which he is prompted and governed, whose character he reflects... 8. of the cause for which..." (Thayer, p. 189; 1537)*

Hearing is the origin source or cause of all faith. The convictions, trust and confidence that one possesses is directly related to his hearing and the lack of faith, conviction, trust and confidence is also related to a refusal to hear. Jesus made this point very clear in the parable of the sower. Note the emphasis on hearing.

*Now the parable is this: **The seed is the word of God.** 12 And those by the way side are **they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved.** 13 And those on the rock (are) they who, when **they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.** 14 And that which fell among the thorns,*

*these are they that **have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of (this) life, and bring no fruit to perfection.** 15 And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, **having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience.** Luke 8:8-15*

It is this emphasis that leads Jesus in verse eighteen to make the following warning.

*Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he thinketh he hath. Luke 8:18*

Faith comes when the word of God enters into a good and honest heart who is intent and careful about how he is “hearing”

*“akoe... 1 hearing, by which one perceives sounds... sense of hearing... Hebraistically, akoe akoue in by hearing to hear i.e. to perceive by hearing... 2. the organ of hearing, the ear... 3. thing heard; a. instruction...” (Thayer p. 22; 189)*

As can be seen by this definition, there is nothing special about the hearing itself. The hearing that produces faith is the same sense that brings all sounds into our mind. It is simply the organ of hearing. This is what creates faith. This is at the same time a clear explanation and a perplexing question. It is clear because just as a child learns how to speak his parent’s language, and gains most of the information in his mind by hearing, so also does each man gain faith by the same means. There is nothing miraculous about gaining faith. There is no special organ or need that God or the preacher must bring about in order for faith to be developed. It only takes hearing. The perplexing question then is if it is this simple and this easy why is it that so few gain faith. Well, as noted above, it is a human failure, not a divine one! God has done everything necessary and possible to give man faith. But by his own free will he will choose how he hears and whether or not he will trust and believe what God has designed to create faith.

### **and hearing by the word of Christ.**

Like the power of the seed to germinate in the ground the “word” has the power to generate faith in those who hear it.

*hrema... 1. Prop. that which is or has been uttered by the living voice, thing spoken, word... i.e. a. any sound produced by the voice and having a definite meaning... b. plural speech, discourse... words, sayings... 2. in imitation of the Hebrew the subject-matter of speech, thing spoken of, thing; ...” (Thayer p. 562; 4487)*

This passage plainly teaches that all faith is tied to the human ear and eye hearing/reading and getting it into the mind where the power Scripture has the ability to generate faith.

*Every scripture inspired of God (is) also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. 17 That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work. 2 Tim 3:16-17*

*For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 11 so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. Isa 55:10-11*

The process is clearly set forth in Thessalonians. Those who accept the words of God for what they really are will find that the Word of God works in those who believe.

*And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, (even the word) of God, ye accepted (it) not (as) the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe. 1 Th 2:13*

So there is nothing supernatural or miraculous about faith. God has placed the power of faith into a simple message which when hearing one must choose whether or not to believe. It can be rejected or accepted based upon the will of the hearer. The power and evidence to believe are in the word itself. But there is nothing compelling. It is a message of truth and holiness which each man has the right to decide what he will do with. It can be rejected as the word of men, or accepted as the word of God. Either way it has done exactly what God wanted it to do. God had warned Isaiah that he would preach the message God was giving to him, but the people would not hear and when he was finished preaching, the cities would be waste and without inhabitant.

*And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send*

me. 9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed. 11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, Isa 6:8-11

This is the same problem Paul was facing.

### **18 But I say, (in contrast to what Isaiah had said) Did they not hear?**

Was the problem in the hearing? Did we fail to get the message out. Did they not hearken to the report because the apostles and prophets of the first century failed to do their duty? NO! They all had the opportunity to hear the news. As a matter of fact, they had truly heard it in every place. God did not fail Israel here. It was Israel who had failed God. They knew it was coming. Even Moses had told them it was to come.(v 19) But when it came, they stumbled and became angry.

### **Yea, verily, Their sound went out into all the earth, And their words unto the ends of the world.**

This is a quote from a passage that has a close tie to Romans 1:19-20:

*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. 2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. 3 There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard. 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Ps 19:1-4*

God's means of proclaiming the gospel has the same ability as that of the material creation to get the message out. Just as the sun moon and stars declare God's glory so that man is without excuse, so also has the message of the gospel. We may not be able to cite exactly how God has done it with the gospel, but we can accept by faith that he has.

But the other side of this issue is also true. Just as man has rejected the evidence of the heavens and earth and does not believe (though without excuse) so also man has rejected the message of the gospel. But no matter how many reject, it does not reflect on God's faithfulness nor upon the power of the evidence. It reflects on the stubborn and wilful ignorance of man.

### **19 But I say, Did Israel not know?**

Didn't Israel "realize all this?"

*"ginosko... I. univ. 1. to learn to know, come to know, get a knowledge of;... 2 to know, understand, perceive, have knowledge of... II in particular ginosko, to become acquainted with, to know, denotes a discriminating apprehension of external impressions, a knowledge grounded in personal experience ..." (Thayer, p. 117-118; 1097)*

Had God not given them enough to learn and get a knowledge of this? Could they not have perceived and become acquainted with it all? The obvious answer from the previous verse is that they could have, but they chose not to. Paul reaches all the way back to Moses to show just how far back in their history God had been preparing them for this moment. Nearly the entire book of Deuteronomy is filled with warnings, curses, and prophecies of their unfaithfulness. The rest of it is filled with exhortations and motivations to get them to keep it.

### **First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation, With a nation void of understanding will I anger you.**

These words are quoted from a song spoken by Moses, and are among the final words spoken to Israel before he ascended Mt Pisgah to his death. They reveal God's bitter disappointment with their unfaithfulness and how he intended to deal with them over it.

*They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; They have provoked me to anger with their vanities: And I will move them to jealousy with those that are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. Deut 32:21*

This chapter began with God's glory, splendor, and love, of his grace in allowing them to possess the land of Canaan, and the wonderful full and rich blessings he would give them there. They speak

of Israel's treachery and adultery in forsaking God for Idols, of neglecting and forgetting God. After this verse they move to the anguish and bitterness of God's wrath upon them(32:19-44). Perhaps the Jews had never really understood what this passage meant. But the Spirit now explains through Paul that it is the jealousy that will be provoked when they are cast off as God's people and the Gentiles are taken in their place.

## **20 And Isaiah is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I became manifest unto them that asked not of me.**

*I am inquired of by them that asked not (for me); I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. 2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, that walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts; 3 a people that provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens, and burning incense upon bricks; 4 that sit among the graves, and lodge in the secret places; that eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; 5 that say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day. Isa 65:1-5*

Again one has to wonder did Israel ever stop and sit up at this statement? Did they ever wonder who it might be that God was referring to. It couldn't be them. They were not a people who had not sought him and they were not a people who had not asked of him. Who else but the Gentiles could it be speaking of? If they had not thought of it before God was making certain that they were thinking of it now. What Paul was revealing here in print, he had also preached. These were the verses being used to wake Israel up to its peril. In its stupor and slumber it had lost the kingdom of God. Now Gentiles were streaming into the church with the Messiah as king over his kingdom and they were at risk of missing it altogether. If Paul could help it he would bring this to their minds and attempt to wake them up even if it brought severe persecution. He wanted them to be provoked to "jealousy" and "anger"

*"parazeloo... to provoke to zelos... [see para IV. 3] a. to provoke to jealousy or rivalry... b. to provoke to anger..."* (Thayer, p. 482; 3863)

*"parorgizo... to rouse to wrath, to provoke, exasperate, anger..."* (Thayer, p. 490; 3949)

## **21 But as to Israel he saith, All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.**

What a terrible indictment upon Israel. From their call out of Egypt, all through the Judges and Kings, God pleaded with Israel to hearken to him and all day long they were a disobedient and gainsaying people.

*"apeitheo... not to allow oneself to be persuaded; not to comply with; a. to refuse or withhold believe(in Christ, in the gospel; ...) ... b. to refuse belief and obedience..."* (Thayer p 55; 544)

*"anti-lego,... to speak against, gainsay, contradict;... to oppose one's self to one, decline to obey him, declare one's self against him, refuse to have anything to do with him..."* (Thayer, p. 50; 483)

They would not allow themselves to be persuaded to comply with God's will from the very beginning. They promised that they would, but the refused to believe and obey. They also spoke against, contradicted and opposed themselves to what God wanted. They truly were smoke in God's nostrils and a fire that burns all day(Isa 65:5). God spread his hands out in appeal after appeal, but they refused all his efforts. Notice how Isaiah finishes this passage. God tells them that he will find servants who will be faithful to him. When that time comes the unfaithful ones will get what they so richly deserve.

*Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be put to shame; 14 behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall wail for vexation of spirit. 15 And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen; and the Lord Jehovah will slay thee; and he will call his servants by another name: Isa 65:13-15*



## Romans 11:1-12

As noted at the beginning of the Ninth chapter, Romans 9-11 is a unit. It is God's explanation to his people about what happened to Israel and why it happened. In a sense, it is similar to the Tenth chapter of Corinthians. It reveals how all of God's efforts to save them failed because of their own attitudes and deficiencies. In this chapter, God will warn his people that they must be careful not to mirror any of the attitudes that Israel had. If they do they will suffer the same fate. There were four basic misunderstandings in Israel that had led to this fate.

1. They had misunderstood the election of God, and it had made them arrogant. 9:1-23
2. They misunderstood the mercy and compassion of God, and it made them careless. 9:19-32
3. They misunderstood the righteousness of God which is of faith. 9:30-33; 10:1-3
4. They misunderstood their Messiah and his message of salvation to them. 9:30-33; 10:4-13

This final chapter will now sum up God's intent and his methods of dealing with Israel. Take a moment to review the flow of this chapter.

*God has not cast off his people. 11:1-3  
God's people have always been the righteous remnant according to the election of grace. 11:4-6  
Though Israel as a whole did not obtain it the election did. 11:7  
The rest of Israel had a spirit of stupor, they could not see or hear right up to the present moment. 11:8-10  
It was still God's hope that this final act of calling the Gentiles would create a jealousy that will drive them back to him. 11:11-12  
Even Paul's preaching to the Gentiles held out a hope that some in Israel would repent. 11:13-15  
God likens the fate of Israel to breaking off branches and to the calling of Gentile as branches being grafted back in. 11:16-21  
God wants the branches to have humility and fear. No one is safe without faith and full submission to God. 11:19-21  
All of this reveals the goodness and severity of God. Though God never changes we can receive both goodness or severity based on our faith and deeds. 11:22-24  
Yet another mystery: a hardening has befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles come in, so all Israel shall be saved: 11: 25-28  
Just as the Gentiles were cast off then reclaimed individually so also Israel can be cast off then reclaimed individually. 11:29-32  
A doxology of praise and adoration for God's wisdom here. 11:33-36*

The Jewish nation rejected their Messiah before Pontius Pilate. Though God had pleaded with them, only a handful in each city were responding to the gospel. The majority remained steadfast in their disobedience. If we are to understand the first words of this chapter, we must see the distinction God has made between those who are his people and the physical nation of Israel from which they had come. Chapter nine proved that just being a physical descendent from Abraham or Isaac did not make one a true spiritual Israelite, but only those whom God elected. The name Israel had changed on the day of Pentecost. It was taken from the physical nation that had borne it and was given to those who were baptized into Christ.

*27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. 28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one (man) in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise. . . . 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him (that was born) after the Spirit, so also it is now. . . . 16 And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace (be) upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. Gal 3:27-29; 4:28-29; 6:16;*

After the cross the nation of Israel continued to use the name to describe themselves, but God had removed it from them and given it to the church. Once we see this distinction between the people of God(his true and genuine people) and those who were simply called by a national title of Israel, then this passage becomes much easier to understand and harmonizes well with what was taught in Romans 9-10 about the rejection of the nation. If we do not make this distinction, then we are left to seek for an explanation of how God can reject them in nine and ten, but now we are told that he will not.

## 1. I say then, Did God cast of his people?

Again the logical connection between this chapter and the one before it remains intact with the term “then”

“*oun...* a conj. indicating that something follows from another necessarily; ... Hence it is used in drawing a conclusion and in connecting sentences together logically, *then, therefore, accordingly, consequently, these things being so...*” (Thayer, p. 463-464; 3767)

The questions posed ponders the possibility that what has been said in the previous two chapters and quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures could be understood to mean that God had “cast off” his people.

“*apotheo... to thrust away, push away, repel...* in the N. T. only in the Mid. ... *to thrust away from one’s self, to drive away from one’s self, i. e. to repudiate, reject, refuse...*” (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 70; 683)

Had God “*thrust, pushed, or driven*” his people “*away from himself?*” Had God “*repudiated, rejected or refused*” them? Anything said in the previous chapter that might have led to that conclusion is completely repudiated with the expression:

### God forbid(May it never be! NASB)

This is one of those few places in the Scripture where an idiom of an earlier era is no longer used and therefore must be updated.

The phrase *me genoito* lit., ‘let it not be’ (*me*, negative and *ginomai*, to become), is idiomatically translated “God forbid” ... In Paul’s epistles it is almost entirely used to express the Apostle’s repudiation of an inference which he apprehends may be drawn from his argument. (Vine Vol 2 p 117)

Neither the word “God” or “forbid” are in the text. What Paul said is: “**may it never be!!!!**” Since this was a strong Greek idiom, the felt translators the need to intensify by using an idiom common to that day. “God forbid” used to be a strong way to affirm the impossibility of something. The NASB corrected this with “May it never be!” The NKJV with “Certainly not!”

Since “*ginomai* means “*to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be,*” or *to come to pass, happen,*” and “*me*” is a “*particle of negation*” The Holy Spirit is stating that such a conclusion must never come into existence or happen. It is a lie and a false conclusion. It is impossible for such a thing to be.

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This leads to some interesting mental gymnastics. Jesus told the Jewish leaders and later spoke of Jerusalem:

*Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Matt 21:43*

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. Matt 23:37-38*

The nation that God had brought up out of Egypt was about to cease to exist. The priesthood was going to come to an end and the precious genealogical tables by which the priests and Levites could be identified would be destroyed. It was then impossible for that nation to exist as it had existed prior to the cross. Their law had been abrogated and was no longer valid. It was all nearing the vanishing point.

*In that he saith, A new (covenant) he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away. Heb 8:13*

The Spirit is obviously not contradicting the plain and obvious truth that the system of salvation under which God’s people would be saved was changed. What he is affirming is that God’s people have never been cast off by God. Never has the faithful God broken faith with his people. God has never ever cast off one of his people. He cannot do so!

Let’s examine the facts. Before Christ came, men and women like Zacharias and Elizabeth and

Joseph lived.

*And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. Mt 1:19*

*There was in the days of Herod, king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah: and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Lk 1:5-6*

There were people during the life of Christ who followed him, believed in him and never wavered in their faith. These were God's people.

*And many women were there beholding from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: 56 among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. Mt 27:55-56*

There were 120 in the upper room when Matthias was chosen to replace Judas. These were the people of God and he never cast them off. All the devout Jews who were walking blamelessly before Jesus was crucified and who continued to walk blamelessly during and after he was crucified were God's people. God never cast these people off. But those in Israel who were not his people. Unfaithful and wicked in their hearts and minds, these he had cast off. These were the people Jesus was speaking to in the gospels.

*I know that ye are Abraham's seed: yet ye seek to kill me, because my word hath not free course in you. 38 I speak the things which I have seen with (my) Father: and ye also do the things which ye heard from (your) father. 39 They answered and said unto him, Our father is Abraham. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I heard from God: this did not Abraham. 41 Ye do the works of your father. They said unto him, We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, (even) God. 42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. 43 Why do ye not understand my speech? (Even) because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of (your) father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. Jn 8:37-44*

They were of the seed of Abraham, but they were not God's children nor God's people. They were of their father the devil. It was the devil's works they were doing and though they were of the seed of Abraham, they were cast off.

Did God reject the physical nation of Israel who were of the seed of Abraham if they did not do the works of Abraham? Romans 1-3 and 9-10, resound with "yes." They are cast off until they obey the gospel. But did God reject his people? The answer sounds forth loud and clear it is an absolute "no."

Consider some of the Old Testament examples where God did cast someone off. When the kings of Judah reached a depth of depravity and evil, God cast them off:

*Is this man Coniah a despised broken vessel? is he a vessel wherein none delighteth? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into the land which they know not? 29 O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of Jehovah. 30 Thus saith Jehovah, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah. Jer 22:28-30*

From that time forward, no matter who the child was or what his moral makeup might be, he was cast off. Never again could a child of this man prosper sitting on the throne of David and ruling in Judah. This is one of the main arguments against Jesus coming back and reigning in Judah. He was a physical descendant of this man and thus was cast off from being a king sitting on a throne in Judah. Another example would be Gehazi.

*The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper (as white) as snow. II Kings 5:27*

When God cast Gehazi off for taking money from Naaman, every child of Gehazi from that day forward would be a leper. It did not matter what his moral makeup was. God had cast them off. This is what happens when God casts someone off. Did God do this to Israel? When they said let his blood be upon us and our children, did God do it?

So when Pilate saw that he prevailed nothing, but rather that a tumult was arising, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man; see ye (to it). 25 And all the people answered and said, His blood (be) on us, and on our children. Mt 27:24-25

Did he irrevocably cast them off forever? No, in Acts 2, he offered pardon and mercy to all of them including their children.

Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. 37 Now when they heard (this,) they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? 38 And Peter (said) unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, (even) as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. Acts 2:36-39

God never cast them off. He changed their system and removed their law, he took the kingdom from them and gave it to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. But they were still Abraham's seed and they had as much right to the gospel as anyone else. He did not repudiate, reject or refuse them.

### **For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.**

With a *for* (*gar-* a particle of affirmation and conclusion offering either the reason and cause or explanation of a previous statement. It serves to explain, make clear, illustrate, a preceding thought), Paul uses himself to illustrate the truth of the above. If God had cast off his people, then Paul who was an Israelite of the seed of Abraham would have been cast off also and could not have been a Christian or an apostle. As noted above, both Gehazi and Jeconiah had been cast off by God. Never could that be lifted. If God had determined to cast off Israel at any point, then all Israel would have been excluded from the pardon in Christ. But God did not do that. Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus and then sent Ananias to give him the words he needed to hear.

And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there, 13 came unto me, and standing by me said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And in that very hour I looked up on him. 14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. 15 For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. 16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name. Acts 22:12-16 Cf Acts 9:10-18

If God had cast off Israel then Paul could not have been saved. Since he was saved, God had not cast off his people.

### **2. God did not cast off his people which he foreknew.**

If one reads over this too quickly they miss the point. Here Paul is not only answering the question he asked in verse one. He is also defining and clarifying who God's people actually are. God's people are those he "foreknew."

*"proginosko... to have knowledge of beforehand; to foreknow..."* (Thayer p 538; 4267)

God's people are those that he had a knowledge of beforehand. Remember the passage where Paul laid this out.

And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, (even) to them that are called according to (his) purpose. 29 For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained (to be) conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: 30 and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Rom 8:28-30

Before God created the heavens and the earth, he designed the gospel. As he designed the gospel he had to determine the quality and type of people the gospel would draw. These were his people whom he foreknew. Paul makes it very clear in Corinthians that God had some definite ideas about whom the gospel would draw (vessels of mercy and who it would repel (vessels of wrath)).

18 For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nought. . . . 22 Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: 23 but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness; 24 but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. . . . 26 For behold your calling, brethren, that not many

*wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, (are called): 27 but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; 28 and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, (yea) and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: 29 that no flesh should glory before God. 1 Cor 1:18-19, 22-24; 26-29*

Those God “foreknew” he “foreordained, called justified and glorified.” Those God would cast off, he destroyed their wisdom, and gave Christ crucified to the Jews(who were not God’s people, a stumbling block) to Gentiles, foolishness but to the called (his people), the wisdom and power of God.

There is no respect of persons with God, hence there would not now be a casting away by God of those who would be his followers in that generation or all future simply because they were of the Israelite nation who had rejected his Christ. As an illustration of this point Paul selects a similar time in history when a prophet had concluded that all Israel had gone bad and should be rejected totally and destroyed:

### **Or know ye not what the scripture saith of Elijah?**

To further prove and establish this truth, he asks them if they have knowledge(*oida - to know, understand or perceive*) of an event that is recorded in the Scriptures. This “inspired of God” writing(II Tim 3:16) fully establishes the truth that the Spirit through Paul has just finished revealing. God did not cast off his people. Never has and never will.

Those who know the writings of Kings and Chronicles know well the dark days when Ahab began his 22 year reign over Israel(the ten tribes), married Jezebel, and sold himself to do evil.

*(But there was none like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. 26 And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites did, whom Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel.) 1 Kings 21:25-26*

His wife Jezebel took it into her heart to remove all the prophets of the Lord from Israel(1 Kings 18:4), and it was in the midst of all this wickedness and evil that Elijah is introduced as the man who proclaimed that there would be no rain in Israel except at his word.

*And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. 1 Kings 17:1*

In the third year of the drought, the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal occurs, the 450 prophets of Baal are slain, and God brings rain(1 Kings 18). When Jezebel threatens to kill Elijah also, he flees to Horeb.

*And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel send a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time. 3 And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. 4 But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough; now, O Jehovah, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. 1 Kings 19:1-4*

Note his state of mind. He is so discouraged at the failure to rouse the people back to Jehovah and Jezebel’s free reign to seek his life that he asks God to take his life. These are the circumstances we need to know in order to fully appreciate the pleading that occurs.

### **how he pleaded with God against Israel:**

When Elijah arrived at Mt Horeb, God asked him what he was doing there. He then “pleaded” with God.

*entugchano*...This compound word ... means “to run up against something or someone,” e.g., a bad situation, ... stones and missiles flung by the enemy, striking someone,... also lighting on a book... Often the reference is to an encounter between men... In this case the verb may simply refer to the meeting or it may embrace more concrete aspects, companionship or conversation... The point of the visit may be complaint,... but often, later it is advocacy... religiously this may then be intercession... *entugchano* is twice used for “to approach someone with a complaint”... (Elijah) “makes a complaint” to god concerning Israel, R. 11:2; Festus reports about Paul... (Kittel Vol 8 p. 242-243; 1793)

We are so accustomed to the term pleading being used in a positive sense, that it is wise to see that the word above also has a decidedly negative quality as well. Elijah was not interceding “for” Israel, He was interceding or pleading “against” Israel.

*“kata... I with the GENITIVE 1. Prop. a. down from, down...2. metaph. B. against (properly down upon)...”* (Thayer p 326-327; 2592)

Elijah’s discussion with God was negative, he was pleading “down upon” and “against” them. He was accusing them.

### **3. Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.**

*And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. 9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of Jehovah came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? 10 And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 1 Kings 19:8-10(see also 19:11-14)*

These are serious charges. Elijah had been called by God to work in a very difficult time of Israel’s history. His work and toil had produced so little positive tangible results that Elijah was convinced that it was a hopeless case. There was nothing left to be done but to give up. This is why he had asked God to take his life earlier. Now as he “pleads against” Israel, he is seeking that God will deal with the wicked nation of Israel. Perhaps like James and John he wants God to “rain down fire from heaven and consume them” (Lk 9:52-54). If ever there was a time similar to the one in which Paul was then living, and God would be tempted to cast off his people, it would have been then.

### **4. But what saith the answer of God unto him?**

This is the real issue here. Elijah certainly presented a powerful case against Israel, but what was God response to this prayer? Before discussing this further, ponder the entire response:

*And Jehovah said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; 16 and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. 17 And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. 18 Yet will I leave (me) seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him. 1 Kings 19:15-18*

God’s response to Elijah’s pleading is clear: “*him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.*” Were these people cast off? Of course they were! Their rejection of the law and God left him no choice but to punish them for their disobedience.

But this is not the issue. The issue is what about God’s people? Will God cast off his people. The answer comes back loud and clear.

### **I have left for myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal.**

God still had some people in Israel. It was not as bleak as Elijah thought and these words may have been designed to comfort him. There are still seven thousand men in Israel who have been kept for God and who have not defiled themselves. These are God’s people, and he has not cast off his people. He has only cast off those who are not his people.

### **5. Even so then at this present time also**

With the phrase “even so then” the Spirit clearly marks out the similarity between what happening in the days of Elijah as illustrated by what God said to him and what was happening at that time. The term “even so” is used to “refer to what preceded” in such a way as to say that what follows is in the same “manner” and in the same “way.” The term “then” is used to “indicate that something follows from another necessarily.”

*“houtu... in this manner, thus, so; 1. by virtue of its native demonstrative force it refers to what preceded; in the manner spoken of; in the way described; in the way it was once; in this manner; in such a manner; thus so...”*

(Thayer, p. 468-469; 3779)

“*oun...* a conj. indicating that something follows from another necessarily; ... Hence it is used in drawing a conclusion and in connecting sentences together logically, *then, therefore, accordingly, consequently, these things being so...*” (Thayer, p. 463-464; 3767)

Hence things are exactly the same at “this present moment” as they were in the days of Elijah.

“*nun...* adv. *now...* 1. adv. of Time, *now*, i.e. *at the present time*; ... it stands in a conclusion or sequence; *as things now are, as the matter now stands; under these circumstances; in the present state of affairs; since these things are so; as it is...*” (Thayer, p. 430; 3568)

“*kairos...* 1. *due measure*; nowhere so in the bibl. writ. 2. *a measure of time*; a larger or smaller portion of time; hence a. univ. *a fixed and definite time...* b. *opportune or seasonable time...* c. *the right time...* d. *a (limited) period of time...* e. as often in Grk. writ., ... is equiv. to what time brings, the state of the times, the things and events of time...” (Thayer, p. 318-319; 2540)

### **there is a remnant according to the election of grace.**

Those 7,000 men represented a remnant of grace. Though the rest of the nation was to be punished for their wickedness these 7,000 would not be punished. These were the ones “God had left for himself.” In exactly the same way, after the Jews had crucified their own Messiah and rejected him as king, God had left for himself a remnant “according to” the election of grace.

~~“*κατὰ, White* Acts 2:41 *κατὰ* is a preposition, variously rendered, in proportion, variously, a standard, a rule, in the same manner, b... as respects; with regard to; in reference to; so far as relates to; as concerning;...c. according to, agreeably to; in reference to agreement or conformity to a standard, in various ways (aa) according to anything as a standard, agreeably to...(bb) in proportion to, according to the measure of...”~~ (Thayer, p. 328; 2596)

Once again we come back to the point made so many times now in Romans. God’s people are saved according to his grace. They too have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. They too have no standing in his sight based upon their own works. They are God’s people because God decreed in eternity that those who would trust him and submit to Jesus as his Christ would be his people.

In Acts 2 there were 3,000 out of the over 1,000,000 who swelled the population of Jerusalem during the feast of Pentecost who saved themselves from that crooked generation.

*And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. 41 They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added (unto them) in that day about three thousand souls. Acts 2:40-41*

*But many of them that heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. Acts 4:4*

*and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of them and women; Acts 5:14*

*Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a Acts 6:1*

*And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. Acts 6:7*

This is the righteous remnant. It would continue to grow and swell as the gospel went out into all the world. These were equivalent to those in Elijah’s day. The nation of Israel as God’s chosen people were rejected because of disobedience and faithlessness. But the nation of Israel as individuals were as acceptable to God upon obedience to the gospel as any other people.

### **6. But if it is by grace, it is no more of works:**

As one ponders the relationship of this verse to the rest of the chapter, one is led to an important conclusion. Since this point has already been fully dealt with back in the Third and Fourth chapters, it is not being reintroduced here simply because it has not yet been revealed.

*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God: 20 because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law (cometh) the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; 24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption Rom 3:19-24*

*What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, hath found according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not toward God. 3 For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. 4 Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. 6 Even as David also pronounceth blessing upon the man, unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works, Rom 4:1-6*

It is here is because it was the reason why Israel was being cast off.

*What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: 31 but Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at (that) law. 32 Wherefore? Because (they sought it) not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled at the stone of stumbling; Rom 9:30-32*

This concept cannot be discussed too much in the New Testament. It is a major stumbling point in the heart of man. Being a part of God's remnant is an act of grace on his part. Remember, ALL HAVE SINNED. Once that is understood, then it is not hard to grasp this. Since all have sinned, and the wages of one sin is death, only God could provide the means by which man could be saved. That means whatever it might be is an act of grace. Once it has been determined that it is an act of grace then it is "no more" of works.

*"ouketi... an adv. which denies simply... no longer, no more, no further..." (Thayer p 462-463; 3765)*

It has to be one or the other. If it is an act of grace than it can "no longer" be an obligation due to works. This was fully explained earlier: *"Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt."* If a man had earned it, then God would be cheating him to deny it to him. But the fact is that no man had or could earn it for all had sinned. Grace ceases to be grace when it is a debt owed as an obligation due to the works of one who has earned a reward.

### **otherwise grace is no more grace.**

Once the above is understood, all becomes clear. Work leads to debt and obligation on the part of the one contracting out the work. If an employee successfully fulfills all the conditions of the job then his paycheck is his by right and there is no grace at all. If this is not the case then grace is not grace. The basic meaning of grace is *"kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved."* Grace can't be grace if that is not what it is. The Jews simply could not see that. They could not understand that everything in their law was based upon grace. Their feast days, priesthood, sacrifices and worship were all based upon grace. Only those who perfectly kept the law could speak of works. Those who had violated it even once needed grace not works.

This verses is open to grave misunderstandings and has been used as a proof text to teach a grievous error. Some see in this verse the idea that God has not asked us to do anything but believe and that anything added to that must be a work. Some have gone so far as to place baptism as a work to earn salvation. Some cannot see how grace can be grace if baptism is a necessary part of its reception. But though the acts of God have never been tied to works of merit, God has always demanded works of faith(Heb 11; James 2). Naaman's was told he must dip seven times in the Jordan river. Noah's had to build an ark and Abraham had to offer Isaac. No requirement God places upon a sinner to receive his grace is a work. Even if God asked him to pay a million dollars, slave his whole life, or be baptized a thousand times, it is still not enough to pay for or earn what Jesus did on the cross for us.

Whatever conditions God selects to receive his grace can not be claimed as works of merit. It is solely a gift of grace. None could be so foolish as to believe that baptism is a work that causes any one to merit salvation. It is only a act of faith on the part of a believer who is told that his salvation

is a gift and its reception is through hearing the word, believing it, repenting of all things contrary to the will of God, confessing that we believe that Jesus is Lord, Christ, and King, and being immersed in water which is our new birth and also our imitation of Jesus death burial and resurrection. After doing all that none would dare claim God now owed them anything. It was a conditional gift, a work of faith (James 2:14-26).

### **7. What then? That which Israel seeketh for, that he obtained not;**

The term “what then” is made up of the interrogative pronoun “*ti*” which makes it a question and “*oun... a conjunction indicating that something follows from another necessarily.*” The Spirit is asking what “*follows necessarily*” from the above reasoning? What conclusion should be drawn now that it all has been revealed? The very thing that Israel was “seeking” for, is the very thing he had not obtained.

*epizeteo... to inquire for, seek for, search for, seek diligently... i.q. to desire, wish for, crave...* (Thayer p 238; 1934)

Israel was inquiring for, seeking and searching for works. They wanted a righteousness that was based upon works. Remember the main points made just a few verses earlier (Rom 10:30-33; 11:1.

*the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, attained to the righteousness which is of faith: 10:30  
Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive because they sought it not by faith, but by works. 10:31-32  
I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 10:2  
being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the  
righteousness of God. 10:3*

The nation of Israel rejected their Messiah and continued in their rebellion after God pointed it out to them. In their own mind, they were seeking a law of righteousness by works. They killed Jesus because he told them that they had failed in their attempt. Now more than twenty years after the crucifixion, they were still seeking, and still had not “obtained” it.

*“epitugchano... 1. to light or hit upon any person or thing... 2. to attain to, to obtain...”* (Thayer, p. 245; 2013)

They had not come upon nor attained to righteousness or salvation based upon their imperfect obedience to the Law. They never would. They had rejected the only means God would ever offer them. *Christ is the end of the law to everyone who believes. 10:4* Their wilful ignorance was leading them further away from Jesus Christ. Yet though they did not obtain it.

### **but the election obtained it,**

The “election” did obtain that which Israel was seeking for.

*“ekloge... election, choice... a. the act of picking out, choosing... b. the thing or person chosen...”* (Thayer, p. 197; 1589)

These are the ones God selected and crafted the gospel to draw. They received it because they believed in Jesus and obeyed the gospel. They accepted the foolish things in the word as the wisdom of God, the base things as being beautiful, the weak things as having great power. They trusted God and were compelled through the testimony and evidence offered by the apostles and prophets to accept Jesus as the long awaited and prophesied Messiah. The election drawn from both Jews and Gentiles obtained the righteousness which is from God by faith.

### **and the rest were hardened:**

This has always been the sad reality of life. Though God wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, Multitudes simply do not desire to listen. They do not want to believe and trust in God and submit to his Christ. Though the elect are going to obtain the righteousness which is from God by faith, the “rest” will not.

*“loipos... left; plur. the remaining, the rest... the rest of any number or class under consideration... the rest, the things that remain... what remains... i.e. a. hereafter, for the future, henceforth... b. at last, already... c. to loipon, dropping the notion of time, signifies for the rest, besides, moreover, [A. V. often finally], forming a transition to other things, to which the attention of the hearer or reader is directed...”* (Thayer, p. 382; 3062-3064)

All those who are not of the election are “the remaining ones,” “the rest of any number or class

under consideration. When you look at Israel, you have the elect and then you have those who remain after the elect are removed. The entire remainder after the elect are removed “were hardened.”

*“poroo ... (poros, hard skin, a hardening, induration); to cover with a thick skin, to harden, by covering with a callus, [R. V. everywhere simply to harden] metaph., ... to make the heart dull, ... Pass. To grow hard or callous, become dull, lose the power of understanding: Rom 11:7...” (Thayer p. 559; 4456)*

Like Pharaoh so many years before them, God had asked Israel to do something they refused to do. The more God asked the harder and more stubborn they became. Their hearts actually developed a callus after awhile and did not even feel it any more. The initial process is illustrated in Acts.

*Beware therefore, lest that come upon (you) which is spoken in the prophets: 41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; For I work a work in your days, A work which ye shall in no wise believe, if one declare it unto you. 42 And as they went out, they besought that these words might be spoken to them the next sabbath. 43 Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. 44 And the next sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed. 46 And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, (saying), I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth. 48 And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. Acts 13:40-48*

This same scenario repeated itself beginning with Jesus and continuing through his apostles. The gospel was preached, the people warned not to reject it. They rejected it then became jealous, angry and bitter. As time passed their hearts became so hardened and calloused that other more vile deeds followed. These Jews from Antioch followed Paul to Lystra and stoned him there.

**8. According as it is written, God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear unto this very day.**

Though there is not a specific passage that has all the above recorded in the Old Covenant, the sentiments are brought up over and over again as God has to work with the stubborn and rebellious in Israel.

*And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that Jehovah did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; 3 the great trials which thine eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders: 4 **but Jehovah hath not given you a heart to know, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.** Deut 29:2-4*

*And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me. 9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, **Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.** 10 **Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart,** and turn again, and be healed. 11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, 12 and Jehovah have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. Isa 6:8-12*

*Tarry ye and wonder; take your pleasure and be blind: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. 10 **For Jehovah hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes,** the prophets; and your heads, the seers, hath he covered. 11 And all vision is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed: 12 and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned. 13 And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw nigh (unto me), and with their mouth and with their lips to honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught (them); Isa 29:8-13*

*Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of the rebellious house, **that have eyes to see, and see not, that have ears to hear, and hear not;** for they are a rebellious house. Ezek 12:2*

Jesus told the Jews essentially the same thing while he lived among them.

*And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive: 15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, And*

*their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes they have closed; Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And should turn again, And I should heal them. Matt 13:14-15*

The point of this is obvious, during the days of Moses in Deuteronomy, and in the days of Isaiah and Ezekiel, and from the historical accounts of the judges and kings every generation in between had people like this. You could read the law to them but they could not hear it, you could show them the Scriptures and tell them what it means and they could not perceive or understand it. The interesting point is the fact that the Scriptures tell us that God gave it to them. The solution is set forth in Thessalonians:

*and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: 12 that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: II Th 2:10-13*

Note again the distinction. Those who perish did not “receive” the love of the truth. They refused to “take with the hand” what God offered them. Once they have rejected this God sends a working of error that they might believe a lie. This is the vengeance that God metes out. On the other hand, Paul feels bound to give thanks to God for the elect who were chosen unto salvation and belief of the truth. Hence the key is right here, just as it is in the first chapter of Romans where it is revealed that “*the gospel it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*” When the gospel is presented those who believe it are granted salvation, those who reject it are given a spirit of stupor, eyes that can’t see, ears that can’t hear, hearts that can’t perceive. Remember those who do not believe make God a liar{

*If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that he hath borne witness concerning his Son. 10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son. I Jn 5:9-10*

Small wonder there are some serious consequences to disbelieving the gospel.

## **9. And David saith,**

The righteous indignation of the righteous as they suffer at the hands of the wicked, comes out loud and clear. You could see it in Elijah’s pleading with God against Israel, and now in David’s pleading against his persecutors. It is also quite likely that as the type of Christ, he speaks for him as well for though Jesus initially asked God to forgive them, he also strongly warned them that there would be severe consequences for what they were doing(Mt 24) Before reading only the quotation, take a few moments to get the context.

*They gave me also gall for my food; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. 22 Let their table before them become a snare; and when they are in peace, (let it become) a trap. 23 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see; and make their loins continually to shake. 24 Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let the fierceness of thine anger overtake them. 25 Let their habitation be desolate; let none dwell in their tents. 26 For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they tell of the sorrow of those whom thou hast wounded. 27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity; and let them not come into thy righteousness. 28 Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the righteous. Ps 69:21-28*

Verse 21 was fulfilled at Jesus crucifixion, and all four writers record it(Mt 27:48; Mk 15:36; Lk 23:36; Jn 19:29-30). It is highly probable that not only is this quoted then because David expressed it of the deaf and blind wicked souls in Israel in his own day, but also of the same type of people who mistreated and crucified the Messiah. These curses certainly applied to both.

**let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them.**

It is at the table that we “eat, drink and enjoy good.”

*There is nothing better for a man (than) that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God. Eccl 2:24*

*And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy good in all his labor, is the gift of God. Eccl 3:13*

*Behold, that which I have seen to be good and to be comely is for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy good in all his labor, wherein he laboreth under the sun, all the days of his life which God hath given him: for this is his portion. Eccl 5:18*

*Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be joyful: for that shall abide with him in his labor (all) the days of his life which God hath given him under the sun. Eccl 8:15*

Thus the table represents the joy, happiness and contentment that man extracts from all the labor and toil. It is the place where he sits with his friends and family, the place where he feasts and makes merry. David's "pleading against" these men prays that God will make a terrible example out of them. Their blatant disregard for God and God's children makes them ripe for such a judgment. *"They hate me without a cause(69:4), for thy sake I have borne reproach(7), I became a byword unto them(11), I am the song of the drunkards(12), they gave me also gall for my food; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink(21)."*

Because they have done this, David pleads against them to God. The fact that this makes it into an inspired Psalm proves conclusively that there is nothing evil or wrong about this request. Only by making an example out of such blatant wickedness can others be warned against it.

The four consequences he pleads for are severe in the extreme.

*"pagis,... prop. that which holds fast... a snare, trap, noose; a. prop. of snares in which birds are entangled and caught,... as a snare, i.e unexpectedly, suddenly, because birds and beasts are caught unawares,...b. trop. a snare, i.e. whatever brings peril, loss, destruction: of a sudden and unexpected deadly peril... of the allurements and seductions of sin...the allurements to sin by which the devil holds one bound..." (Thayer, p. 472; 3803)*

The pleasures of life are to become a snare, trap or noose that will hold them tightly in its grasp. The sad fulfillment of this is so often found even today in those who though living in wickedness conclude that God is not angry with them because of their material blessings. Because they have so much to be thankful for, they conclude that they have done well.

*And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. 20 But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be? 21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. Lk 12:19-21*

But it doesn't stop with the snare, it is also a "trap, " "stumbling block" and "recompense" to them.

*thera* denotes "a hunting, chase," then, "a prey"; hence, figuratively, of "preparing destruction by a net or trap," <Rom. 11:9>.# (Vine's Expository Dictionary Vol 4 p. 150)

*"skandalon... prop. the movable stick or trigger of a trap, trap-stick; a trap, snare; any impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble or fall.... [a stumbling block, occasion of stumbling]..." (Thayer, Joseph 577; 4625)*

*"antapodoma* akin to *antapodidomi*, "to recompense" (see below), lit., "a giving back in return" (*anti*, "in return," *apo*, back, *didomi*, "to give"), a requital, recompense, is used (a) in a favorable sense, Luke 14:12; (b) in an unfavorable sense, Rom. 11:9, indicating that the present condition of the Jewish nation is the retributive effect of their transgressions, on account of which that which was designed as a blessing ("their table") has become a means of judgment." (Vine's Expository Dictionary Vol 3 p. 259 468)

The degree of retribution is severe, a snare generally captures a bird, a trap an animal, and a stumbling block was a special stone that triggered some form of death trap to those who tripped it. The recompense is the literal fulfillment that the other terms merely figuratively hint at. Their recompense, as we look back over history began at the destruction of Jerusalem, and has continued to the present day.

## **10. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see,**

This one is difficult because it seems to be a different attitude than the one expressed by Paul earlier in the book. While Paul's hearts desire and supplication for them is that they might be saved and he has unceasing pain in his heart for them, David seems to have a different attitude. But does he? Is there any real difference between what David says in his Psalm and what Paul wrote in I Cor 1:21-25 about the things God chose to keep the arrogant and unbelieving from seeing?

*so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure; 5 (which is) a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that*

*ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: 6 if so be that it is righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, 7 and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, 8 rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: 9 who shall suffer punishment, (even) eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day. II Th 1:4-10*

The reality is that though we can hope for salvation and repentance, we can also plead against those who persecute and hinder God's message.

**and bow down their back always.**

This most see as literally fulfilled in the difficulties that the Jewish people have had throughout the long history of persecution which has befallen them since the destruction of their nation in Ad 70.

### **11 I say then, Did they stumble that they might fall?**

Remember that whenever the Spirit uses a "then," we are required to make a mental summary of what has gone on before and then draw some sort of positive or negative conclusion.

*"oun... a conj. indicating that something follows from another necessarily; ... Hence it is used in drawing a conclusion and in connecting sentences together logically, then, therefore, accordingly, consequently, these things being so..."* (Thayer, p. 463-464; 3767)

This question follows necessarily from the above reasoning. Quickly review the basis of this question:

1. The chapter began with a question that Paul immediately answers in the negative: "When Israel rejected God's chosen Messiah, did God reject his people to the degree where he would not take them back?" The answer: "MAY IT NEVER BE!!!" His first proof is himself who as an Israelite had been accepted by God even after rejecting the Messiah. 11:1
2. He restates the truth: "God did not reject his people whom he foreknew." He follows this with proof from the bleak times of Elijah. When Elijah believed that all was lost and God would have to cast them off God informed him that he had 7,000 who were his people and whom he would save for himself. 11:2-5
3. He makes a direct application to the circumstances of Elijah to his own day by stating that even at that present moment there was a similar group in Israel (remnant according to the election of grace) who still belonged to God. 11:5-6
4. The remnant of Israel received God's grace through Jesus Christ by faith as outlined in the earlier chapters, the rest of Israel was hardened in the exact way that David had prophesied that they would. 11:7-10

Do these four points lead us to conclude that it was God's intent that they might fall? Do the events surrounding Elijah and the prophecy of David lead us to conclude that God hoped that their stumble would lead to a fall? The key to this question is the conjunction "that."

*"hina... a final conjunction (for from local direction, indicated by the adverb, the transition was easy to mental direction or intention) denoting purpose and end: to the intent that; to the end that, in order that; ... it is used 1. prop of the purpose or end; ..."* (Thayer, p. 302-304; 2443)

The question then is "Was it God's intention that their stumbling over Jesus Christ would lead to their fall?" Has anything previously been said lead to that conclusion? We know that it was God's predetermined counsel that they would crucify and slay Jesus, but what was his intent behind it?

*him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: Acts 2:23*

We know that God intended that they would stumble over Jesus Christ. Those who were rebellious and evil needed to be dropped onto their faces in order to see their true condition.

*even as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence: And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame. Rom 9:33*

But that is not the question here. The question here centers on God's intent and purpose in allowing this to happen. After reading David one might be drawn to believe that God actually did this so that the Jews would "fall" and get their just deserts.

*“pipto... to fall; used 1. Of descent from a higher place to a lower; a. Prop. To fall (either from or upon... to fall from or down... 2. Of descent from an erect to a prostrate position... a. to fall down... b. to be prostrated, fall prostrate... g to prostrate one’s self, used now of suppliants, now of persons rendering homage or worship to one... d. to fall out, fall from... e to fall down, fall in ruin: of buildings, walls, etc. B. metaph a. to be cast down from a state of prosperity... b. to fall from a state of uprightness, l. e. to sin... g to perish, i.e. to come to an end, disappear, cease... of virtues, 1 Cor 13:8; to lose authority, no longer have force, of sayings...”* (Thayer, p. 510-511; 4098)

Did God do that? Was it God’s intent that their stumble over Jesus would be to their death and eternal ruin? Was it simply judgement that God wanted?

### **God forbid(May it never be! NASB)**

This is one of those few places in the Scripture where an idiom of an earlier era is no longer used and therefore must be updated.

The phrase *me genoito* lit., ‘let it not be’ (*me*, negative and *ginomai*, to become), is idiomatically translated “God forbid” ... In Paul’s epistles it is almost entirely used to express the Apostle’s repudiation of an inference which he apprehends may be drawn from his argument. (Vine Vol 2 p 117)

Neither the word “God” or “forbid” are in the text. What Paul said is: **“may it never be!!!!”** Since this was a strong Greek idiom, the felt translators the need to intensify by using an idiom common to that day. “God forbid” used to be a strong way to affirm the impossibility of something. The NASB corrected this with “May it never be!” The NKJV with “Certainly not!”

Since “*ginomai* means “*to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be,*” or *to come to pass, happen,*” and “*me*” is a “*particle of negation*” The Holy Spirit is stating that such a conclusion must never come into existence or happen. It is a lie and a false conclusion. It is impossible for such a thing to be.

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This is something that God would never conceive of doing. God is love, he is full of compassion and mercy, he is a pitying Father and a tender shepherd.

*Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness. 9 He will not always chide; neither will he keep (his anger) for ever. 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities. 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him. 14 For he knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust. Ps 103:8-14*

Those who hold such a view of God do not know him. If it was simply God’s intention that Jesus would lead to their fall then why did he offer them pardon and why did Jesus feel as he did?

*And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And parting his garments among them, they cast lots. Lk 23:34*

Why was the gospel to the Jews first? Their stumble over Jesus was not an act of judgment, but an act of mercy. Their stumbling was designed to reveal their unbelief and give them a chance to repent. This is what God’s hoped to accomplish. He desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth(1 Tim. 2:4). There is no respect of persons with God. The fact that they did fall was only the end result of their own unbelief and stubborn heart. It was neither God’s desire or his plan that things come to this end, and it was still his intent that their unbelief and fall might still be used to turn them back around and bring about their salvation.

### **but by their fall salvation (is come) unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy**

With the adversative *alla*, the Spirit now reveals the truth. There was a much bigger vision in God’s eyes than just their fall and salvation being offered to the Gentiles. There was actually a much larger purpose(*eis*) than man could know by simply looking at the surface.

Obviously the best case scenario would have been that when Jesus came all Israel would embrace him, Rome would crucify him, he would then become the Messiah the law would be done away and pardon would then be offered to the Gentiles who had formerly rejected God. But the sad reality was that Israel had also rejected God. Jesus offer of pardon had been scorned and Israel as a

nation had participated in the crucifixion. They had stumbled over him, and then they fell. This is a different term for “fall” than the one in the previous passage.

*“paraptoma... The verb parapipto means “to fall beside or aside,”... the sense “to be led past, “to go astray,” “to be mistaken,”... Hence the noun paraptoma has the meaning “slip,” “error”... the verb parapipto ... “to offend,” “to fall,” “to sin,” ...” (Kittel Vol 6 p. 170-172; 3900)*

*“paraptoma... 1. prop. a fall beside or near something; but nowhere found in this sense. 2. trop. a lapse or deviation from truth and uprightness; a sin, misdeed...” (Thayer, p. 485; 3900)*

The Jews fell, went astray and were mistaken about Jesus. They had deviated from the truth and were now involved in sin. To better appreciate its use here remember how the Spirit used it earlier in the book. First it was used of Jesus being delivered up for our trespasses. Then it was used to describe Adam’s sin in the garden and all the sins that have been committed since.

*25 who was delivered up for our **trespasses**, and was raised for our justification. Rom 4:25*

*But not as the **trespass**, so also (is) the free gift. For if by the **trespass** of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many. 16 And not as through one that sinned, (so) is the gift: for the judgment (came) of one unto condemnation, but the free gift (came) of many **trespasses** unto justification. 17 For if, by the **trespass** of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, (even) Jesus Christ. 18 So then as through one **trespass** (the judgment came) unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness (the free gift came) unto all men to justification of life. 19 For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous. 20 And the law came in besides, that the **trespass** might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly: Rom 5:15-20*

The Jews sinned when they crucified their own Messiah. God wanted them to accept Jesus but they refused. What was God to do? He made the best use of the materials he had to work with. He saved as many in Israel as was possible to save. He offered salvation to the Gentiles, and then hoped that those who were saved from the Gentiles would provoke them to jealousy and lead as many more as possible back to him. This was the good that came out of an altogether bad situation. It is somewhat like what God did with Pharaoh. He could not help the man, but he could use the man to help others. This is what God did. The Jewish rejection paved the way for Paul to go to the Gentiles, and by going to the Gentiles, it would pave the way for more Jews to be won back.

The goal was to “provoke” the Jews “to jealousy.”

*“parazeloo... to provoke to zelos... [see para IV. 3] a. to provoke to jealousy or rivalry... b. to provoke to anger...” (Thayer, p. 482; 3863)*

*“zelos... excitement of mind, ardor, fervor of spirit; 1. zeal, ardor in embracing, pursuing, defending anything... zeal in behalf of, for a person or thing... the fierceness of indignation, punitive zeal,... 2. an envious and contentious rivalry, jealousy...” (Thayer, p. 271; 2205)*

This was God’s true purpose in allowing events to be where they were at that time. The fate of the Jews now hung in the balance. David’s prophecy expresses what they deserve for the terrible things they have done. Even then those things were occurring. But it was not God’s intent or plan that this be the ultimate end. God was doing this in order to one final time to a gainsaying people reach out his hands in love. By calling back the Gentiles, God hoped that it would create zeal, ardor and jealousy that would lead them to re-evaluate the conduct that had put them in this position. God used Moses to reveal that this would be a part of the plan in the Song of Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 31-32. It is a sad song of God’s initial faithfulness, Israel treachery and unfaithfulness and God’s retribution upon them.

*30 And Moses spake in the ears of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were finished. 1 Give ear, ye heavens, and I will speak; And let the earth hear the words of my mouth. 2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain; My speech shall distil as the dew, As the small rain upon the tender grass, And as the showers upon the herb. 3 For I will proclaim the name of Jehovah: Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. 4 The Rock, his work is perfect; For all his ways are justice: A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, Just and right is he. 5 They have dealt corruptly with him, (they are) not his children, (it is) their blemish; (They are) a perverse and crooked generation. 6 Do ye thus requite Jehovah, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? He hath made thee, and established thee. Deut 31:30; 32:1-6*

*They moved him to jealousy with strange (gods); With abominations provoked they him to anger. 17 They sacrificed unto demons, (which were) no God, To gods that they knew not, To new (gods) that came up of late, Which your fathers dreaded not. 18 Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, And hast forgotten God that gave thee birth. 19 And Jehovah saw (it), and abhorred (them), Because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters. 20 And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: For they are a very perverse generation, Children in whom is no faithfulness. 21 They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; They have provoked me to anger with their vanities: And I will move them to jealousy with those that are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. 22 For a fire is kindled in mine anger, And burneth unto the lowest Sheol, And devoureth the earth with its increase, And setteth on fire the foundations of the mountains. 23 I will heap evils upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them: Deut 32:16-23*

Yet even in this, the Spirit reveals that there is one last act of love. One last chance for them to change. Once again, the love and faithfulness of God comes out clearly as it did in the prophets when he had to give them up the first time. In spite of their own wickedness that required judgment, God still feels compassion and wishes it could be otherwise.

*When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. 2 The more (the prophets) called them, the more they went from them: they sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. 3 Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them. 4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws; and I laid food before them. 5 They shall not return into the land of Egypt; but the Assyrian shall be their king, because they refused to return (to me). 6 And the sword shall fall upon their cities, and shall consume their bars, and devour (them), because of their own counsels. 7 And my people are bent on backsliding from me: though they call them to (him that is) on high, none at all will exalt (him). 8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? (how) shall I cast thee off, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? (how) shall I set thee as Zeboiim? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. 9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not come in wrath. 10 They shall walk after Jehovah, who will roar like a lion; for he will roar, and the children shall come trembling from the west. Hosea 11:1-10*

## **12 Now if their fall, is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles;**

This is the pivotal verse upon which the rest of the chapter hinges. Again, context can help us avoid mistakes in exposition. Four points are the thread that holds it all together. First, the fall of Israel came about because of the rebellion of the majority in Israel. The remnant had now been removed and all that is left of Israel are the sinful and rebellious who refuse to repent.

*I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh: 4 who are Israelites; . . . 30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: 31 but Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at (that) law. 32 Wherefore? Because (they sought it) not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled at the stone of stumbling; 33 even as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence: And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame. Rom 9:1-4, 30-33*

*Brethren, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. . . 18 But I say, Did they not hear? Yea, verily, Their sound went out into all the earth, And their words unto the ends of the world. 19 But I say, Did Israel not know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation, With a nation void of understanding will I anger you. 20 And Isaiah is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I became manifest unto them that asked not of me. 21 But as to Israel he saith, All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. Rom 10:1-3, 18-21*

*Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. 7 What then? that which Israel seeketh for, that he obtained not; but the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened: Rom 11:5-7*

Second, God sent Jesus knowing that it would result in him becoming the stone of stumbling. They would stumble because they would become so filled with anger and hatred at his demands that they would kill him. When they killed their own messiah, the proof of their infidelity and evil would be so clear that God would cast them off and they would fall into ruin. Yet as a result of this fall, God would be able to use the crucified Messiah to bless all man with salvation, remove of the Law of Moses (middle wall of partition) and bring in the Gentiles. It was God's intent that the rebellion of Israel would be used to bless the rest of mankind.

*What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: 23 and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, 24 (even) us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles? Rom 9:22-24*

*I say then, Did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid: but by their fall salvation (is come) unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. 12 Now if their fall, is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? . . . 15 For if the casting away of them (is) the reconciling of the world, what (shall) the receiving (of them be), but life from the dead? . . . 32 For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all. Rom 11:11-12; 11:15; 11:32*

Third, it was God's design that the stumbling and casting off of Israel and the calling of the remnant and the Gentiles would be an additional incentive to those left in rebellious Israel to repent and join the remnant. He did this by lavishing so many blessings on the church and then giving these blessings to the Gentiles in hope that it would bring about jealousy.

*But I say, Did Israel not know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation, With a nation void of understanding will I anger you. Rom 10:19*

*11 I say then, Did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid: but by their fall salvation (is come) unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. . . 13 But I speak to you that are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I glorify my ministry; 14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy (them that are) my flesh, and may save some of them. Rom 11:11, 13-14*

Fourth, Paul used the fall of Israel as a warning to the Gentiles who were evidently tempted to become smug and a little arrogant themselves at this change of circumstances. He does not want them to feel that this in any way should lead them to such feelings.

*But if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wast grafted in among them, and didst become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree; 18 glory not over the branches: but if thou gloriest, it is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee. 19 Thou wilt say then, Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. 20 Well; by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not highminded, but fear: 21 for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee. 22 Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. 23 And they also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if thou wast cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and wast grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which are the natural (branches), be grafted into their own olive tree? Rom 11:17-24*

## **12 Now if their fall, is the riches of the world,**

Though it was not God's intent that their stumbling would lead to their fall, but instead that they might be provoked to jealousy, the truth at that moment was that had "fallen." This is the same term for sin and lapsing from the truth that was described in the previous passage. Their fall into sin and evil through the crucifixion of Jesus led to the "riches" of the world.

*"ploutos,... riches, wealth; a. prop. and absol. abundance of external possessions... b. univ. fullness, abundance, plenitude ..." (Thayer, p. 519; 4149)*

All that Jesus death upon the cross purchased, every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3), all the precious and exceeding great promises (II Pet 1:3-4), everything the gospel contained was brought into being through their fall. This is the power of God for all to behold. Everything they did out of hatred, spite and anger was used by God to bring about his purpose.

*for of a truth in this city against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, 28 to do whatsoever thy hand and thy council foreordained to come to pass. Acts 4:27-28*

The wealth of the gospel was created by what "Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together" to do. Much like Adam in chapter five, the Jews too have seen their deeds undone by the power and wisdom of God through Christ.

## **and their loss the riches of the Gentiles;**

Not only did they fall into trespass, but they also suffered a great "loss."

*"hettema... 1. A diminution, decrease: i.e. defeat, ... 2. Loss..." (Thayer, p 281; 2275)*

As a result of that act, and their subsequent refusal to repent, they lost everything Paul described earlier.

*who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service (of God), and the promises; 5 whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Rom 9:4-5*

Israel lost all of the benefits that the above conferred when they crucified Jesus and refused to repent. It had been taken from them and given to another.

*Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Mt 21:43*

Now the Jews had fallen into the set of circumstances very similar to the one the Gentiles had been called out of.

*Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; 12 that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. Eph 2:11-12*

But this loss to them had brought wealth and riches to the Gentiles.

*But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, 15 having abolished in the flesh the enmity, (even) the law of commandments (contained) in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, (so) making peace; 16 and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17 and he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh: 18 for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father. 19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, Eph 2:13-19*

With all this clearly in mind, we are now drawn to his fascinating conclusion. God was able to use the terrible rebellion and lack of faith on the part of the Jews to bring about the crucifixion of Jesus and the reconciling of all men to himself. God was able to take the very worst the Jews could do to him and turn it into a wonderful blessing to the world. That is the power of God in operation. How much more though is that power manifest when he can take those same people and use them in the kingdom. Consider what Paul was able to do when he was brought into the kingdom. Think of what would have occurred if all the Jews could have been brought in the same way.

The Jewish rulers who should have been the builders rejected the stone. God then cast off Israel at the crucifixion as Jesus had warned as God revealed by tearing the veil of the temple. Fifty days later on Pentecost God offered them forgiveness and the opportunity to help. They refused and not only would not help, but instead sought to actively hinder. In spite of all their efforts their fall was bringing wealth to the world.

### **how much more their fulness?**

“How much” is a term that number, magnitude or degree.

*“posos... how great... neut. How much... plur. how many...”(Thayer p. 532 4212)*

*“posos... an adjective of number, magnitude, degree etc., is rendered "how great" in Mt. 6:23...”(Vine's Expository Dictionary Vol 2 p. 174; 4214)*

Added to this is the term “more”

*“mallon... more, to a greater degree; rather; 1. When added to verbs and adjectives it denotes increase, a greater quantity, a larger measure, a higher degree, more, more fully... b. In comparison it often so stands that ‘than before’ must be mentally added,[A.V. the more, so much the more], ... 2. it marks the preference of one thing above another, and is to be rendered rather, sooner...” (Thayer, p. 387-388; 3123).*

Hence the question is: “How much greater a degree?” “How much higher magnitude? God wants us to ponder how wonderful it would have been if Israel had “fully” come in instead of just the remnant.

*“pleroma,... 1. etymologically it has a passive sense, that which is(or has been)filled; very rarely so in class. Grk.: a ship, inasmuch as it is filled(i.e. manned) with sailors, rowers and soldiers... In the N. T. the body of believers, as that which is filled with the presence, power, agency, riches of God and of Christ... 2. that which fills or with*

*which a thing is filled ...esp. of those things with which ships are filled, freight and merchandise, sailors, oarsmen, soldiers,... Of time... that portion of time by which a longer antecedent period is completed; hence completeness, fulness, of time... 3. fulness, abundance ... full number,*” (Thayer, p. 518 4138)

As noted above, this hypothetical question forces Christians to see the real loss in the fall of Israel. Far from glee, smugness or conceit, this ought to lead to the same feelings Paul expressed. Part of his unceasing pain and sorrow and his prayers for them to be saved centers here. Their zeal for God, if it could have been directed properly would have been a great addition to the church. It would have removed their persecution and given their zeal to the Lord to do great and lasting good. It had not happened yet, and the sad tale of history tells us that it did not happen at all. But the point is not to speak of it as happening, only to force Christians to see Israel in a different light than they might be then looking upon them.

### 13 But I speak to you that are Gentiles.

All of this is spoken for the benefit of the Gentiles, and all that Paul has said about the Jews is written to the Gentiles. This is not being spoken to benefit the rebellious in Israel, but to benefit the Gentiles who were now the children of God. There was much to be learned and gleaned from the example of the Jewish fall. But first and foremost it must be understood that Paul's attitude toward these fervent persecutors of the Lord is the right one. All the Gentiles Christians ought to have the same feelings of unceasing pain and sorrow and a strong desire for them to be saved.

#### Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I glorify my ministry;

The term "inasmuch" is actually three different Greek terms. The first term is a relative adjective which here would relate to measure and degree:

*"hosos, ... a relative adjective. ... d. of measure and degree, in comparative sentences, ... the more... so much the more, a great deal... eph oson, for as much as, in so far as... Rom 11:13"* (Thayer, p. 456; 3745).

"For as much as" or "in so far as" are relative to his position as an apostle to the Gentiles. In this case, as it regards the measure and degree of his apostleship as it relates to this matter of Israel's rejection, Paul glorifies his ministry. Yet there are two other terms that are more difficult to see in the translation that must also be pondered. The first is a term that does not always get translated, but adds force and emphasis to the statement.

*"men a weakened form of men and hence properly a particle of affirmation: truly, certainly, surely, indeed— ... Owing to this, its original meaning it adds a certain force to the terms and phrases with which it is connected, and thus contrast them with or distinguishes them from others."* (Thayer p 397; 3303)

Paul wanted to strongly contrast this statement. He wanted to distinguish it from the rest of the sentence. The term "*then/oun*" expresses how we are to understand the contrast or distinction. It indicates that the glory he gives to his apostleship "follows necessarily" from what he has just said about Israel. Because the more Jews are brought into the kingdom the greater blessing it will be, Paul adds special emphasis to his apostleship to the Gentiles and "glorifies" his ministry.

*"doxazo... 1. to think, suppose, be of opinion... 2. to praise, extol, magnify, celebrate... 3. to honor, do honor to, hold in honor... to worship..."* (Thayer, 157; 1392)

He praises, extols, magnifies and celebrates his ministry. He honors and holds it in honor. He deems his "ministry" to be of the highest value and importance. The term minister and ministry are words to describe the service one does for others.

*"diakonia... service, ministering, esp. of those who execute the commands of others. 1. univ. ... 2. of those who by the command of God proclaim and promote religion among men; a. of the office of Moses... b. of the office of the apostles and its administration... c. of the ministrations or service of all who, endowed by God with powers of mind and heart peculiarly adapted to this end, endeavor zealously and laboriously to promote the cause of Christ among men, as apostles, prophets, evangelists, elders, etc. ... 3. the ministrations of those who render to others the offices of Christian affection... 4. the office of deacon in the primitive church... 5 the service of those who prepare and present food. ..."* (Thayer, p. 137-138; 1248)

Paul used this term several times to describe the position of service Jesus had selected him to fill.

*But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the **ministry** which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Acts 20:24*

*And when he had saluted them, he rehearsed one by one the things which God had wrought among the Gentiles through his **ministry**. Acts 21:19*

*I thank him that enabled me, (even) Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to (his) **service**; 1 Tim 1:12*

Paul glorified this ministry and held it in the highest esteem. Not only because it gave him the right to help the Gentiles, but also for the reason now set forth.

### 14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy (them that are) my flesh, and may save some of them.

"If by any means" is an expression of condition, potential and hope. He glorifies his ministry indeed

because "if there is any way," "if there is any possibility," "if in any way it might be brought about" that he might provoke to jealousy and save some of his brethren, then he will have done a wonderful thing. Paul had taken to heart the prophecies of Moses. He had made them a hope and a vision that he sought to fulfill. He kept them in his mind and they kept him zealous and warm even when he was being severely persecuted.

Paul always preached to the Jew first and after he had expended all the efforts the Jews would take would then turn to the Gentiles in fulfillment of prophecy.

*And the next sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God. 45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed. 46 And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, (saying), I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth. 48 And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. 49 And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region. Acts 13:44-49*

But he reveals here that he turned to the Gentiles, with the secret **hope** within his heart that he just might win a few more of these Jews by turning to the Gentiles. This was an additional reason that he considered it his obligation to teach, convert, and ground as many Gentiles as is possible is for the additional reasons of hoping this would provoke some more in Israel to a righteous jealousy that would bring about their conversion.

When the Jews see the amazing things the gospel is doing for the Gentiles, some are going to take a closer look. When they see ungodly, immoral, corrupt, unbelievers, turning into faithful, righteous, loving people they will begin to wonder. When they see the numbers of people and their quality they are going to become jealous. This would obviously harden some even more, and cause them to forever reject the gospel. But others are going to wonder why Christianity is accomplishing more than Judaism ever did. They are going to wonder why the cream of Judaism had left to serve Christ, they are going to wonder where the power to change these people came from. It is Paul's hope that as he does a wonderful job with these people and great glory is given to God that at the same time some of his friends and nation will come back to God.

Up to the moment of the writing of Romans, because of their own stubborn rebellion they were still in that condition and their jealousy had done little more than create severe persecution that was poured out on the church. A careful reading of Acts proves this to be the truth.

One has to stop for a moment and marvel at this man. When he turned to Christ he suffered the loss of all things and counted it all but refuse to gain Jesus Christ.

*Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, Phil 3:7-8*

As he went from city to city preaching the truth of the gospel to his Jewish brethren, they beat him, maligned him and sought to destroy him in every possible way. The hotter their jealousy became the more severe the punishment they sought to give him.

*Henceforth, let no man trouble me; for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus. Gal 6:17*

*Of the Jews five times received I forty (stripes) save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; 2 Cor 11:24-25*

Paul did this not only for his kinsmen according to the flesh but also for the church.

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church; Col 1:24*

His love for God, the Messiah Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church and the lost of both Jew and Gentile origin constrained him to do all this. It cost him a great price to provoke the Jews to jealousy and yet he rejoiced in that ministry. Hoping that he might save some. This is also strong testimony that completely reinterprets his zeal in preaching to the Gentiles. He was not angry and bitter against the Jews. He was actually doing what was in their best interests all the while actually

making them see red in his zeal for preaching to the lost. This must have been exceedingly difficult for him as it was so terribly misinterpreted by the Jews.

### **15 For if the casting away of them (is) the reconciling of the world,**

With a “for/gar” Paul sets us up to see this as an additional reason or explanation for the previous statement. This too is why he glorifies his ministry and hopes to save some. As noted above, when God cast Israel away, it was for crucifying his son. That act brought about the reconciling of the world.

*“katallage... 1. exchange; of the business of money-changers, exchanging equiv. values... Hence 2. adjustment of a difference, reconciliation, restoration to favor,... in the N.T., of the restoration of the favor of God to sinners that repent and put their trust in the expiatory death of Christ...” (Thayer p. 333; 2643)*

This term was used earlier in the book to describe what God did for man out of his own love and mercy. He paid the difference and offered reconciliation and restoration of favor to the whole world.

*But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath (of God) through him. 10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life; 11 and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. Rom 5:8-11*

Israel was no worse than the rest of the world when they did this. Though it is true that in this act they made themselves sinners and the enemies of God, the rest of the world already in sin and an enemy of God. The only difference was that the rest of the world was already in sin and this was the final act by which God’s people were cast off. But in the wisdom of God, through a very amazing set of circumstances we are indebted to God for using Israel in this manner. Far from causing us to despise or look down upon them, it ought to cause us to desire their salvation.

### **what (shall) the receiving (of them be), but life from the dead?**

A careful rereading of Romans six through eight gives a clear explanation of this expression. Just as Paul was alive apart from the law, but when the command came, sin revived and he died, so all the Jews who have not yet turned to Christ are also dead. God used these people to make life possible for others. No Christian should feel so smug or conceited that they reject the idea that those who are left in Israel do not deserve the same opportunity to be baptized into death that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father even they also ought to walk in newness of life. If only these enemies could be saved as other enemies had. If only these sinners could be reconciled as other sinners. This is Paul’s point here. This is not a prophecy for the future. The future for Israel is less than 20 years away. There is no future for them after this. So this is not a prophecy, but a simple statement of fact.

### **16 And if the firstfruit is holy, so is the lump:**

Again, the goal of this section becomes ever more clear. Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles. It is clear that the Gentiles were getting the wrong message from the rejection of the Jews. As Paul winds down this section on this explanation of this rejection, he now deals with this one final matter. The Gentile Christians must not look down upon or think less of the Jewish sinners than they do other sinners. They have the same right to the gospel as others. He will get more and more pointed with this point until he leaves no doubt that this is its real intent.

The firstfruits were offered to Jehovah by the Jews as an act of gratitude and faith in the coming harvest. They were a portion taken from the lump. The Jews would bake a loaf out of the first fruits and offer them to the Lord.

*Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave-loaves of two tenth parts (of an ephah): they shall be of fine flour, they shall be baked with leaven, for first-fruits unto Jehovah. Lev 23:17*

The point the Spirit makes here is that if someone takes a portion of all their firstfruits and offers them to the Lord then the lump they were taken from is obviously sanctified and holy. That being the case, if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the holy firstfruits of the nation(and they are!!!), then everything that comes later is also holy.

## and if the root is holy, so are the branches

This is exactly the same thing stated with a different figure. The root is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve tribes. God chose them and made them the root of the nation of Israel. They were obviously holy and sanctified to be God's holy and chosen nation. Since they were holy, what about the branches that come out of this root? All the descendants of Abraham have a special place in God's heart because of his promises to them.

Again, as we follow Paul's reasoning into the next few verses we find him seeking to keep the Gentiles thinking in a sober manner. They are not some special group better than the Jews. The Jews were God's people, they were holy in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as their firstfruits and root. They were a holy, sanctified, set apart nation. Now they have been cast off. Let them seriously consider the implications. It was not because the Jews were no longer special to God that they were cast off. It was because of their own sins that they were cast off, but God was still hoping for repentance and forgiveness, and so should all the Christians in that day.

**17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wast grafted in among them, and didst become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree;**

It was Jeremiah who first used this analogy. What God did with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the twelve tribes of Israel is compared to Jehovah planting a special olive tree that was fair. He had high expectations of receiving goodly fruit, but when the house of Israel did evil in the days of Jeremiah, he broke off all the branches.

*Jehovah called thy name, A green olive-tree, fair with goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. 17 For Jehovah of hosts, who planted thee, hath pronounced evil against thee, because of the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have wrought for themselves in provoking me to anger by offering incense unto Baal. Jer 11:16-17*

So it was again in the days of Paul. Israel had been a green olive tree.

*For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? Luke 23:31*

But when they crucified the Messiah, God broke off all the branches. On the day of Pentecost, God began to graft branches back in again based upon the conditions of the New Covenant he made at that time (Heb 8:8-13). Then, in Acts 10, he began to graft in the Gentiles, those who had previously possessed no connection with the root. The Gentiles were the wild olive branches. When God called Cornelius and his household together by an angelic messenger, Peter understood that they too were to be grafted in to the olive tree.

*And Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him. Acts 10:34-35*

When these wild olive branches were grafted into the tree, their entire nature changed. No longer wild olive branches, they become identical to the other branches of the tree.

*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. 28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one (man) in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise. Gal 3:27-29*

After revealing that all who are baptized into Christ and put on Christ are Abraham's seed and no longer Jew or Gentile, the Spirit then revealed that those who remained in Israel and refused to come to the Christ had become the children of Hagar, and those who returned to Christ through baptism were all now children of promise like Isaac was.

*But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother. 27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; Break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: For more are the children of the desolate than of her that hath the husband. 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him (that was born) after the Spirit, so also it is now. 30 Howbeit what saith the scripture? Cast out the handmaid and her son: for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman. 31 Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a handmaid, but of the freewoman. Gal 4:26-31*

The point of this analogy again is clear, Gentile Christians were once part of a wild olive tree, while

the Jews around them were a part of the true olive tree. They were broken off at the crucifixion. Since then through the preaching of the gospel, everyone was given the opportunity to be grafted back in. Both the branches that had been broken off as well as the wild olive branches that had never been part of the tree. Both were contrary to nature, and therefore neither side had any priority or preeminence over the other.

### **18 glory not over the branches:**

Paul now becomes very pointed and clear to the Gentiles over whom Jesus has given him special care as the apostle to the Gentiles. When Gentiles look at their present position, they must not attempt to elevate themselves by a comparison with those who fell. They carefully guard themselves and never “glory over” any branches that were broken off.

*“kata-kauchaomai...prop. to glory against, to exult over, to boast one’s self to the injury of(a person or a thing)...  
“ (Thayer, p. 331; 2620)*

There are few things more dangerous to the Christian than finding reasons to feel powerful and strong on the basis of mistakes or misfortunes that occur to others. God strongly condemned this in the Proverbs.

*Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, And let not thy heart be glad when he is overthrown; 18 Lest Jehovah see it, and it displease him, And he turn away his wrath from him. Prov 24:17-18*

Paul cautioned Gentile Christians not to fall into this trap. They must not find any reasons to glory or find reasons for boasting and exultation over the branches that were broken off. The only reasonable thing such an event should bring is pity, compassion, and a desire to help.

*Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: 44 but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; 45 that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. 46 For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more (than others?) do not even the Gentiles the same? 48 Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Mt 5:43-48*

### **but if thou gloriest, it is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee.**

He now shows the shallow emptiness that such boasting would reveal about them. Any Christian reading this section and finding himself feeling feelings, of exultation and self congratulation needs to remind himself of one fundamental truth. Anyone who can find anything good in the terrible fall of the branches that were broken off, needs to remember some things about history.

Who was it that left his fathers home and all its comforts to go to a far away land? who trusted God no matter what and set in motion all that had now come to them? The unalterable fact that no subsequent failure on the part of his fleshly offspring could remove was that Abraham was the root, and his efforts were blessed by God. There should be no pride or joy over the fall of his fleshly children. It was the promise and oath sworn to him that has brought all the blessings they were then enjoying. They had not brought this great plan into being, God had through the help of Abraham and others of his children. Now was a time for pity, compassion and gratitude. Not pride arrogance and smugness.

### **19 Thou wilt say then, Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.**

As occurs so often in Scripture, the author of the living and active word of God(Heb 4:12) sees the response to his revelation and expresses it even as it is dawning in the heart of the reader. The above truths are powerful. The Jews were broken off of the tree when they crucified the Messiah. As a result of that act, the door to the Gentiles opened and they could be grafted in. The Spirit sees that the readers are ready to draw a conclusion that follows necessarily from the previous statements(*oun*). Three previous statements in this chapter would lead them to the above conclusion. In speaking of the hardening and rebellion of Israel, the Spirit revealed the blessings God was able to extract from it.

*by their fall salvation (is come) unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. 9:11  
their fall, is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; 9:12*

*the casting away of them (is) the reconciling of the world, 9:15*

God's wisdom was so magnificent in this matter! His love for man was so great! He knew the Jews would not accept Jesus as Messiah so he devised a plan that would use that rebellion to bless the rest of man. Yes, it was true that branches were broken off in all the above. Yes, it is true that as a result of the breaking off of these branches salvation came to the Gentiles. The reasoning is sound up to this point, but it does not lead to the conclusion that some were taking it to. In the next verse, the Spirit commends the reasoning, but slams the door on the false conclusion.

## **20 Well; by their unbelief they were broken off,**

The term "well" establishes their conclusion above as the proper one.

*kalos... adv. beautifully, finely, excellently, well... a. rightly, so that there shall be no room for blame... kalos right! well! an expression of approval... b excellently, nobly, commendably..." (Thayer p 323; 2573)*

The above conclusion is right, but this one fundamental truth must not be left out of one's meditation on this subject. Why were they broken off? It was unbelief that led to their loss.

*"apistia ... want of faith and trust; 1. unfaithfulness, faithlessness, (of persons betraying a trust)... 2. want of faith, unbelief. shown in withholding belief in the divine power..." (Thayer p 56; 570)*

The sacred trust that God had given to Israel was violated when they rejected his Son. They were faithless in their conduct toward him. This is why they were rejected and broken off. This was not a sign of any special in the Gentiles, on a sign of the wickedness of the Jews and the justice of God. God had warned Israel of exactly the same thing when they entered the promised land.

*Ye therefore shall keep my statutes and mine ordinances, and shall not do any of these abominations; neither the home-born, nor the stranger that sojourneth among you; 27 (for all these abominations have the men of the land done, that were before you, and the land is defiled); 28 that the land vomit not you out also, when ye defile it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. Lev 18:26-28*

*Speak not thou in thy heart, after that Jehovah thy God hath thrust them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness Jehovah hath brought me in to possess this land; whereas for the wickedness of these nations Jehovah doth drive them out from before thee. 5 Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart, dost thou go in to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations Jehovah thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may establish the word which Jehovah sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 6 Know therefore, that Jehovah thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people. Deut 9:4-6*

Israel received the promised land because the nations who had possessed them previously were wicked and they had defiled the land which then vomited them out. They were warned never to think that their own righteousness of conduct had merited this blessing. That is exactly what the Spirit is warning against here.

## **and thou standest by thy faith.**

The Gentiles had been grafted in and were now standing by their faith.

*"histemi... to cause or make to stand; to place, put set; 1. univ... to bid to stand by... b. to make firm, fix, establish... to cause a person or thing to keep his or its place... to establish a thing, cause it to stand i.e. to uphold or sustain the authority or force of anything: Heb 10:9..." (Thayer, p. 307-308; 2476)*

Faith is what made them "firm," "fixed" and "established" as a branch. Faith was the thing that "caused" them "to keep" their "place." Faith was "upholding" and "sustaining" them. There was nothing in themselves that brought about Israel's fall or their own call. All they had to keep them in their present position was their faith. For that reason, they had nothing to boast about.

## **Be not highminded, but fear:**

They must guard against the fleshly lust of "the pride of life." There was absolutely nothing special about them. What made it all work was the gospel and the grace it contained coupled with their own faith which gave them access.

*Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; 2 through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Rom 5:1-2*

The Spirit here offers some very important advice. Do not allow what happened to Israel to cause any Christian to become “highminded.”

*“phroneo... 1. to have understanding, be wise.... 2. to feel, to think... to have an opinion of ones self, think of one’s self... to think, judge...several persons are said phronein to auto, to be of the same mind, i.e. to agree together, cherish the same views, be harmonious... 3. to direct one’s mind to a thing, to seek or strive for, ... to seek one’s interests or advantage, to be of one’s party, side with him...” (Thayer, p 658; 5426)*

*hupselos... high, lofty a. prop of place...exalted on high b. metaphorically, eminent, exalted: in influence and honor...” (Thayer p. 646; 5308 )*

The things they feel, think, have opinions about, and make judgments on must not reflect an eminent or exalted feeling about themselves. Fallen man who needs God to lift him back to salvation has no room for such feelings.

*And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought: 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get. 13 But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner. 14 I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Luke 18:9-14*

One can feel though for these Gentiles. They had been persecuted and hindered in many ways by these ungodly Jews, they may have begun using this as a defensive mechanism. They were broken off any way, I am better than them even though they may have more money, and be more assured of their position. It is not safe though to do so. It leads to pride and destruction.

A more valuable and sensible emotion after learning all the above is “fear.”

*“phobeo... to terrify, frighten..., to put to flight by terrifying (to scare away). 1. to be put to flight, to flee, ... 2. to fear, be afraid; ... to be struck with fear, to be seized with alarm: of those who fear harm or injury... of those startled by strange sights or occurrences...3. to reverence, venerate, to treat with deference or reverential obedience...” (Thayer, p. 655-656; 5399).*

What God was doing with his people who had cast him off was a “frightening” and “terrifying” thing. The consequences were horrible.

## **21 for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee.**

With another *for/gar* the Spirit identifies this as an additional reason or cause for the previous statement. This is why one must not be highminded but fear. In spite of all he had promised and all he had done for them, he did not spare them in the end.

*“pheidomai... (to keep back) to spare... to abstain [A.V. forbear] an inf. Denoting the act abstained from being supplied from the context...” (Thayer, p. 650; 5339 )*

All the warnings and punishments that God had revealed would occur if they were not faithful to him had come to pass. Not one thing would be withheld. The destruction of Jerusalem was a few short years over the horizon. God did not spare or hold back what he had warned about. If God would not spare the true children of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, and the great nation that had sprung from them when they were unfaithful and unbelieving, then he will not spare anyone. No Christian is safe from the penalties of unbelief. Paul elaborates on this more fully in I Cor 10:1-12. He shows that the blessings God had lavished on Israel at the beginning of the nation were very similar to the blessings the Christians in that day possessed. He warned them not to fall into the same traps that brought about the fall of Israel in the wilderness. He concludes with a sentiment very similar to this one.

*Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 1 Cor 10:11-12*

## **22 Behold then the goodness and severity of God:**

A great vista of revelation has just been opened up to the eyes of those who read with intelligence and understanding. Beginning in Chapter Nine and moving rapidly through many historical events,

the Spirit has laid out the goodness and severity of God. He has shown God's calling of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. How God used Pharaoh, how God had given Israel the opportunity to hear the gospel and how they had spurned it to follow their own righteousness. He also revealed how God had dealt with Israel during Elijah's day, and how he dealt with the 7,000 who had not bowed their knee to Baal. He then concluded with how David had prophesied of the punishment toward those who rejected the Messiah and refused to repent. The difference in God's character is based upon the difference in the vessels themselves.

The Spirit now bids us to ponder what "follows from all the above necessarily -oun" There are some important conclusions now to be drawn based on all this. So summing up this great and lofty view of God's dealings with man that has now been revealed he bids us "behold." Look, see, perceive, notice, examine!

"*ide* and *idou* are imperative moods, active and middle voices, respectively, of *eido*, "to see," calling attention to what may be seen or heard or mentally apprehended in any way. These are regularly rendered "behold." (Vine's, Vol 1 p 114; 2396)

"*eido*... lat. *video*... The tenses coming from *eido* and retained by usage form two families, of which one signifies *to see*, the other *to know*... I. *to see* 1. *to perceive* (with the eyes)... 2. lat. *video*, *to perceive by any of the senses*... 3. univ *to perceive, notice, discern, discover*... 4. *to see*, i.e. to turn the eyes, the mind, the attention to anything; a. *to pay attention, observe*... b. ... *to see about something* i.e. to ascertain what must be done about it... c. *to inspect, examine*... d. *to look at, behold*... 5. *to experience*, any state of condition... 6. *to see i.e. have an interview with, to visit*..." (Thayer, p. 172-174; 1492)

We have been treated to a vista of God's goodness and severity. This is a critical element of God's character. When God passed by Moses and allowed him to see his glory, even then he wanted Moses to understand and write down for us the goodness and severity of God.

*And Jehovah passed by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth, 7 keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear (the guilty), visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation. 8 And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. Exod 34:6-8*

### **toward them that fell, severity;**

God now clearly explains as he did to Moses why there is severity toward some and goodness toward others. The term "toward" is an important preposition to understand in this context.

"*epi*... With the GENITIVE ... I. Of Place; and 1 of the place on which a. *Upon* the surface... after verbs of abiding, remaining, standing, going, coming, etc... c. Fig used of that upon which anything rests... II of Time when; ... *In the time* or *age* of a man... B. with the DATIVE... 1. properly; a. of the place where or in which... 2. Metaph.; a. of that upon which any action, effect, condition, rests as a basis of support; prop. *upon the ground of*; and a. of that upon which anything is sustained or upheld... b. of that upon which anything rests (our upon)... d of the reason or motive underlying words and deeds... *for, on account of*... C. With the ACCUSATIVE... I of place; 1. Properly; a. Of the place above, over, which our *up on, on to*... b. Of motions to a place whose surface is occupied or touched... *upon, unto*... after verbs of going, coming, ascending, descending, falling, etc. (Thayer, p. 231-236; 1909)

Since "them that fell" is in the DATIVE, the Spirit is affirming that it was while they were in a state and condition of having fallen that God's severity occurred. It is the condition of being fallen (aorist participle) that the "action, effect and condition" of God's severity "rests as a basis of support." The fact is that God is love, the giver of every good and perfect gift. He is never severe unless the person forces it by refusing to repent and remaining guilty. Again those who remain in a fallen state, and refuse to obey the gospel bring God's severity upon themselves upon that very basis.

The term fall describes a "descent from a higher place to a lower," as in a trip and landing on one's face or a building falling into ruin. It is often used as here in the metaphorical sense of falling from a position of prosperity or righteousness into a position of poverty or sin.

"*pipto*... *to fall*; used 1. Of descent from a higher place to a lower; a. Prop. *To fall* (either *from* or *upon*... *to fall from* or *down*... 2. Of descent from an erect to a prostrate position... a. *to fall down*... b. *to be prostrated, fall prostrate*... g *to prostrate one's self*, used now of suppliants, now of persons rendering homage or worship to one... d. *to fall out, fall from*... e *to fall down, fall in ruin*: of buildings, walls, etc. B. metaph a. *to be cast down from a state of prosperity*... b. to fall from a state of uprightness, i. e. *to sin*... g *to perish*, i.e. *to come to an end, disappear, cease*... of virtues,

I Cor 13:8; *to lose authority, no longer have force, of sayings...* (Thayer, p. 510-511; 4098)

God's severity is only reserved for those who have fallen and it is upon the basis of this fall that the severity occurs. The nature of a fall as it related to Israel (or any of God's people for that matter) can only occur when God's will is clearly revealed to them and they simply refuse to obey it. Those who fall in weakness and immediately repent do not see the severity of God.

*Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness. 9 He will not always chide; neither will he keep (his anger) for ever. 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities. 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him. 14 For he knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust. 15 As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. 16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. 17 But the lovingkindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; 18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his precepts to do them. Ps 103:8-18*

The "severity" of God will only come upon those who fall, stay fallen, and obdurately remain in that state regardless of God's efforts to help them back up because they do not want to get up.

*apotomia...* (the nature of that which is *apotomos*, *cut off, abrupt, precipitous like a cliff, rough...* prop. *sharpness, ... severity, roughness, rigor...*) (Thayer p. 69; 663)

We witness this severity in the garden after the fall, at the flood, Sodom & Gomorrah, Egypt, seven nations of Canaan, and then over and over again upon Israel during the judges and kings. All who fall and refuse to repent and arise again with God's help will by that very condition find God's severity being poured out upon them. God can be very rough, sharp, and severe. He cast off the Jews who feel, and would soon destroy them in a manner similar to the flood.

**but toward thee, God's goodness,**

Again *epe* is used to describe a state and condition. Those who have obeyed the gospel, and continued to serve and trust God are in a state or condition of receiving God's "goodness."

*chrestotes...* In profane Gk. the noun, ... is used only to characterize person, and along the lines of the adj., it means a. "honesty," "respectability," "worthiness." ... It then means b. "kindness," "friendliness," "mildness," whether publicly or privately. The ruler's mildness... In private life it denotes marital love when used with *philostorgia*... The New Testament... b. It is used only in the Pauline corpus. Here it means the same thing as the Adj., and like it denotes God's gracious attitude and acts toward sinners, both before Christ... and also in and through Christ..." (Kittel, Vol 9, P. 489-492; 5544).

This is God's reaction and response to those who trust him. He has always been kind, friendly and mild toward those who do this. God wants to be longsuffering, forgiving and compassionate. But it is our response to his commands, our trust in his wisdom, and our devotion and honor of his Divinity that determine how God will treat us.

**if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.**

It is here that the real power of the above warning is revealed. There is no exterior set of circumstances that creates God's goodness or God's severity. It is the individual actions of each person. Anyone can fall and receive God's severity and anyone can trust and obey and receive his goodness.

*The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. 21 But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 22 None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. 23 Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? saith the Lord Jehovah; and not rather that he should return from his way, and live? 24 But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? None of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be remembered: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. 25 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel: Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? 26 When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth*

*iniquity, and dieth therein; in his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. 27 Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. 28 Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Ezek 18:20-28*

Every person is responsible for his/her own relationship with God. It is based upon “continuing” in his goodness.

*“epimeno... to stay at or with; to tarry still; still to abide, to continue, remain; a. prop. of tarrying in a place... b. trop. to persevere, continue...” (Thayer, p. 240; 1961)*

From the very beginning of the book this has been the theme. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. As long as one continues to believe, they will continue to abide in God’s goodness. This is the condition required by God, “otherwise” they too will be cut off from that goodness.

*“epeí...conjunction,... when, since... 2. of cause, etc., since, seeing that, because...” (Thayer, p. 229;).*

**23 And they also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.**

Again following the same line of reasoning as Ezekiel above, nothing is fixed. Those who are wicked and evil and who repent still have the opportunity to be forgiven. Nothing is impossible with God. He that spared not his own son, and while we were enemies reconciled himself to us, can even up to the very end save an unbeliever. Who could say that with more feeling than Paul himself? In that room in Damascus, blinded, neither eating or drinking, fasting and praying. What pleading and begging he must have done. When Ananias came and told him to be baptized and call on the name of the Lord to wash away his sins how beautiful those feet must have been.

Israel, like Saul of Tarsus were at that time in a state of unbelief. As long as they remained in that state, only God’s severity could be offered to them. They had been broken off as branches, but at any moment if their heart would melt and they would stop continuing in unbelief, God could graft them back into the olive tree from which they had been broken off. God has the power and the ability to graft them in again.

**24 For if thou wast cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree,**

With a *for/gar* he gives the reason and cause of the previous verse. God has already accomplished the impossible! The Gentiles had been cast off many generations back. They had taken on the character of a wild olive tree.

5. Wild Olives: Many of these spring from the old roots; others are from the fallen drupes. Isolated trees scattered over many parts of the land, especially in Galilee, are sown by the birds. As a rule the wild olive is but a shrub, with small leaves, a stem more or less prickly, and a small, hard drupe with but little or no oil. That a wild olive branch should be grafted into a fruitful tree would be a proceeding useless and contrary to Nature <Rom 11:17,24>. ISBE Vol 4 p. 2185)

Such trees had life yet in them, but they produced nothing of value. After God left the Gentiles to their own devices, this is how God saw them. Therefore every Gentile convert was a branch that had been cut off of this wild olive tree.

**and wast grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree;**

Man would never do such a thing for it would be a waste of his time. Why graft a branch that could produce nothing of value and put it on a root capable of producing a great harvest? But what man could not do since he did not have the power to change the basic nature of the branch, God could do and had done. If God could clip them from a wild olive tree, graft them into the olive tree that has a productive root and change the essential nature of their productive ability allowing them to produce fruit, then he would certainly not have much difficulty bringing back those in Israel who repented and returned.

**how much more shall these, which are the natural (branches), be grafted into their own olive tree?**

This question has the same construction as the one in verse 12. The adjective “how much” moves the mind toward number, magnitude or degree, and the adverb “more” further intensifies the degree and magnitude. It is the classic proof offered when one argues from the lesser. If a man can lift a 200 pound weight, how much more a 100 pound man? If God can change a wild olive branch into a productive one, he can even more easily take a previously productive olive branch and again attach it back into its own olive tree.

All Gentile Christians should therefore be as Paul. Hoping and praying for repentance. There must not be any rejoicing over their fall or bitterness over the persecutions they were enduring. There was still hope! God could still help them if they could be turned. This was the great hope Paul held and which he now speaks of more fully.

## **25 For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery,**

With a *for/gar* the Spirit reveals the close tie between this thought and what has preceded it. All that Paul has said about the fall of Israel and God’s hope that as many as possible can be brought to him must be remembered and kept in mind. This statement is now offered as an additional “reason and cause” for it. Paul expresses his own intent and purpose that they would not be ignorant of it.

*“thelo,... (derived apparently fr. helein with a fuller aspiration, so that it means prop. to seize with the mind; ...) TO WILL, (have in mind,) intend; i.e. 1. to be resolved or determined, to purpose ... 2. to desire, to wish:... 3. l. q. to love foll. by an inf., to like to do a thing, be fond of doing... 4. in imitation of the Hebr. ... to take delight, have pleasure... the will which proceed from inclination...” (Thayer p 285-286; 2309)*

Paul wanted to be certain that the Gentiles would understand these things so they would not become wise in their own conceits. Ignorance often leads one to misunderstandings about how to properly apply the truth. Paul wants to be certain that they understand this “mystery” so this does not happen to them.

*“mysterion,... In class. Grk. a hidden thing, secret, mystery:... in the Scriptures 1. a hidden or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding... 2. a hidden purpose of counsel; secret will: of men... of God... the secret counsel which govern God in dealing with the righteous, which are hidden from ungodly and wicked men but plain to the godly, ... In the N.T. God’s plan of providing salvation for men through Christ, which was once hidden but now is revealed:...” (Thayer, p. 420; 3466)*

The term “mystery” is used in the Scriptures in three distinct ways. First, it is used to describe the gospel as something that had been hidden in the mind of God and though small glimpses were given through prophecy, it was not made clear until Spirit revealed it to the apostles.

*Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, 26 but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith: Rom 16:25-26*

*how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, 4 whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; 5 which in other generation was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; Eph 3:3-5*

*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; 9 and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things; Eph 3:8-9*

*And on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, Eph 6:19*

*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the spirit, Seen of angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory. 1 Tim 3:16*

This is its usual meaning, but sometimes it has a more specific scope of some individual fact or another contained in the gospel that is now being revealed. It would be impossible to know until it was revealed, but once revealed it is not difficult to understand.

*And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? 11 And he answered and said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. . . . 17 For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not. Mt 13:10-11, 17*

*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 1 Cor 15:51-53*

Jesus revealed some wonderful things in the parables about the gospel and once revealed they are not difficult to understand. This was also the case with Paul new revelation about the resurrection. Some of these details about the Lord's return had never been revealed before. But they are not difficult to understand what they are revealed.

The third use of this term however is different. Sometimes something is revealed, and God has given all the information he intends to give on the topic and it is just a difficult topic.

*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church. Eph 5:31-32*

Paul simply quotes the words spoken in Genesis 2:22-24, then pronounces that even with all that has been revealed (and his own inspiration) it is still a great mystery, because it is difficult to understand.

Paul's use of it here obviously has to be one of the latter two. He is either saying, "I do not want you to be ignorant of this very simple topic that has simply not yet been revealed, and which I am now revealing so you can see it." Or, he is saying "I do not want you to be ignorant of this very difficult to understand concept that has bearing on this issue, but needs to be humble pondered and understood to the best degree possible.

Test yourself, as you read this Scripture which understanding best fits it?

*For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; 26 and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: Rom 11:25-26*

Is this a simple easy to understand fact that only needed revealing to be grasped and understood, or is there some difficulty here that continues to make it something to ponder and meditate upon. If one were to judge from the error, misinterpretations, and variety of explanations as to its meaning, one might be driven to conclude that it is the latter. Clearly there are some difficult elements in this passage, but does it make sense that he does not want them to be ignorant of a mystery they cannot understand? Yet at the very least this is one of those passages Peter warned us to be careful about.

*. . . even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; 16 as also in all (his) epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as (they do) also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. 17 Ye therefore, beloved, knowing (these things) beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness. 2 Pet 3:15b-18*

Many hurtful doctrines have been devised and are based upon this passage. If you have access to Romans by R. C. H. Lenski's, read his comments and quotations on pages 713-730. He quotes Augustine as using this passage to teach that Elijah and Enoch will return and convert the entire Jewish nation. The notion of the conversion of the Jews after the Gentiles have fully come in has been woven into the fabric of the pre-millennial heresy.

If the reader choose to understand this mystery as something incomprehensible and therefore something to use great caution in dealing with, he will be wise. If he sees this as a simple matter once it has been revealed, then let him be cautious and compare other "simple" passages lest he wrest them in his interpretation of this one.

**lest ye be wise in your own conceits,**

Lest is actually two Greek terms that have been merge into one. “*hina*” is a conjunction “*to the intent that; to the end that, in order that*” and “*me*” which denies the thought of what it is joined with. This is being revealed by the spirit so that this cannot happen. God does not was this intent, end or purpose to occur. They must not become “wise” in this manner.

“*phronmos... (phroneo) a. intelligent, wise... opp to moros... b. prudent, i.e. mindful of one’s interests...*” (Thayer, p. 658; 5429)

God does not want anyone to be intelligent or wise in this way. The problem the Spirit seeks to help them avoid is a common one in the Scripture. Man is very prone to taking a few facts, drawing an erroneous conclusion, and then being so wise in that erroneous conclusion that they are no longer thinking clearly. This is exactly what Eve did when the devil twisted God’s words and lied. She was wise in her own conceits when she saw the fruit in the new light of the devil’s lie. Though she was being very foolish, she did not see it that way. Laboring under misinformation, it made perfect sense to her. The term translated “own conceits” is actually a simple reflexive pronoun.

“*heautou... a reflexive pronoun of the 3d person. It is used 1. of the 3d pers. sing. and plur., to denote that the agent and the person acted on are the same... 2. It serves as reflexive also to the 1st and 2d pers. ...*” (Thayer, p. 163; 1438).

A reflexive pronoun is generally used by a writer when he wants to emphasize that the action of the verb is reflected by the pronoun. Hence if a writer is speaking of any strength or ability and uses a reflexive pronoun, he is speaking only of that individuals strength or ability. In this case the wisdom these Gentiles are being warned against would be a wisdom that was their own. It is a violation of God’s strong warning to his people.

*Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, And lean not upon thine own understanding: 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths. 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes; Fear Jehovah, and depart from evil: Prov 3:5-7*

If one is wise in himself, he is leaning on his own understanding and being wise in his own eyes. His wisdom and understanding are coming from within himself and not being directed by outside forces of truth and righteousness. These Gentiles are dangerously close to doing this with the conclusions they have drawn regarding their new status as God’s people.

They were looking at the fall of Israel in the wrong way, and were in danger of thwarting God’s purpose. God had designed the calling in of the Gentiles as an additional incentive to bring Israel back to him. Paul knew this was true, and was acting accordingly, but these Gentiles were in danger of being wise in themselves. Notice the difference:

#### Paul’s View

*I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. 9:1-2*

*Brethren, my heart’s desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved. 10:1*

#### Gentile’s View:

*glory not over the branches: but if thou gloriest, it is not thou that bearest the root, but the root thee. 19 Thou wilt say then, Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. 20 Well; by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not highminded, but fear: 11:18-20*

It is clear that Paul was doing everything in his power to bring about their conversion. You see it in his attitude and in his prayers. The wisdom from above had taught him that this is how he was to view the present set of circumstances. The Gentiles were in danger of a wisdom within themselves. They were looking at it with an eye to glory and boast over the branches that had been broken off, and to feel highminded about their loss. They had completely misread God’s intent and held a completely inappropriate response.

This was a short moment of longsuffering in which God was hoping that more might be saved. This “own conceit” wisdom needed to be destroyed. They were in this position to help save those who could still be saved out of Israel. This is the only purpose for revealing this “mystery!” Those who look at this as a long term prophecy that Israel will be saved before the Lord returns are also laboring under the delusion of “their own conceit” wisdom.

The context is clear, these Gentiles had misread God's intent in casting of Israel. Those who had concluded that they were better than the Jews and that God appeared to love them more needed to repent of their presumption.

The real irony is that even with this information, many today are doing exactly what the Spirit warns against with this very passage. What is offered here is all the information there is on the subject. We must learn to be content with it. As Paul said so well, we must learn not to go beyond the things that are written.

*Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not (to go) beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other.*  
1 Cor 4:6

### **that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel,**

The key to understanding this difficult phrase can only be found by keeping in mind the limitations of the context we have been given and seeking to fully understand the terms and their relationship to the rest of the Scriptures. The most important term in this phrase is "hardening."

*"porosis... the covering with a callus; trop. obtuseness of mental discernment, dulled perception...the mind of one has been blunted of stubbornness, obduracy..."* (Thayer, p. 559; 4457).

*porosis* denotes "a hardening," a covering with a *poros*, a kind of stone, indicating "a process" (from *poroo*, C, No. 1), and is used metaphorically of dulled spiritual perception, Mk 3:5, RV, "at the hardening of their hearts"; Rom. 11:25, RV, "a hardening" (KJV, "blindness"), said of the state of Israel; Eph. 4:8, RV, "hardening," of the heart of Gentiles. (Vine's Vol. 2 p. 194)

Though this term and its noun are used eight times in the New Testament, only a few of its uses are necessary to capture the thought as it is used here. It is used to describe the attitude of the Pharisees and Herodians toward Jesus early in his ministry.

*And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there who had his hand withered. 2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. 3 And he saith unto the man that had his hand withered, Stand forth. 4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do harm? to save a life, or to kill? But they held their peace. 5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their heart, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he stretched it forth; and his hand was restored. 6 And the Pharisees went out, and straightway with the Herodians took counsel against him, how they might destroy him.* Mark 3:1-6

In the above passage, Those who were witnessing Jesus miracle had already made up their minds. Jesus was grieved by this hardening of their heart(same word as here). There was no way to reach them. Their minds were already closed to any further proof or information. It did not matter what Jesus did, these people had their minds closed. This is what hardening refers to. But such a hardening does not have to be permanent. The same term is used to describe Jesus' own disciples.

*And he went up unto them into the boat; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves; 52 for they understood not concerning the loaves, but their heart was hardened.* Mark 6:51-52

When the heart is hardened, it is either ignorant, prejudiced, filled with "own conceit" wisdom, or with bitterness and anger. Such a heart cannot be reasoned with at that moment, though further circumstances and events can bring about a softening as it did with the disciples.

Such a hardening had in part befallen Israel at the moment Paul was writing. Whether it would turn out like the disciples or remain intact until the end depended upon many factors including their own attitude. The term "in part"

*"meros... to share, receive one's due portion,... a part; i.e. 1. a part due or assigned to one... 2. one of the constituent parts of a whole; a. univ. in a context where the whole and its parts are distinguished... kata meros in part, partly... apo merous in a measure, to some degree... ek merous as respects a part,... severally, individually..."* (Thayer, p. 400-401; 3313).

The first difficulty we must surmount is the ambiguity of the term "in part." Does he refer to a portion of those in Israel, or to a portion of the individual heart of each individual Israelite still alive in that generation? The term will allow either use. His use of the identical phrase in Second Corinthians shows the former, while the context has already shown the latter.

*But if any hath caused sorrow, he hath caused sorrow, not to me, but in part (that I press not too heavily) to you all. 2 Cor 2:5*

*What then? that which Israel seeketh for, that he obtained not; but the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened: Rom 11:7*

The hardening and callousing of the hearts of those in Israel was not a complete hardening. There were still some who could be reached. Still a portion of the heart that would still allow an opening if the right set of circumstances occurred. The part though is left undefined, it could be large or it might be small. Yet it is obviously not all, and clearly it has not reached none. There is a part. He did exactly the same thing with the olive branches above. Some branches were broken off, not all, but not none. The reality as was clear to the Gentiles is that the part in this case is the majority. In each city Paul preached at only a few Jews were obedient. Those who rejected were a large number and their hearts were obviously nearly completely hardened. But it was not full! It was not hopeless.

What Paul began in Chapter nine he is now concluding. He loves the Jews, he feels unceasing pain in his heart over their condition. He would even trade places with them if it could have availed(10:1), but the dismal fact is that as it has been from the beginning of their nation so it is now, only a remnant can be reached.

What then is the point? Why reveal the mystery that a hardening in part, has occurred? The context that follows seems to make this clear. Ponder the conclusion for a moment.

*For as ye in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, 31 even so have these also now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you they also may now obtain mercy. 32 For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all. Rom 11:30-32*

Far from arrogance and a highminded view of themselves, they ought to see this as an opportunity. They simply do not know which hardened Jew still has a small place in his heart that can be reached. The present disobedience of the Jews was to be viewed as an opportunity. God still wants to show them mercy. He wants their disobedience to be turned into obedience so that he can show mercy upon them just as he had upon the disobedient Gentiles. This is the central theme of the context and the idea that we should be following as we attempt to follow the Spirit's thoughts here. This is not portrayed as a prophecy. It is a fact of truth that was happening in that time. It has no bearing upon today. Except as an example for us to ponder.

How long will this wonderful opportunity to reach these people exist?

**until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in;**

This phrase carries this mystery beyond the scope of human comprehension. Like much of this section, God is revealing things to us that he fully understands and is working with, but that we must struggle with. As we reach the highest heights of God's revelation of this mystery, we have little to compare it to. It is here that God's warnings about his revelation become so important.

*The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law. Deut 29:29*

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isa 55:8-9*

We dare not guess! We have nothing to guess with and are forbidden to do so. The foolish things that others have devised for this passage must be set aside as fantasy. Augustine taught that Elijah and Enoch would return and convert the entire Jewish nation, another that when all the Gentiles are finally converted, all the Jews will follow and everyone will be saved. Still others that all the Jews that have ever lived will be raised and converted.

Whenever one of Paul's passages receives such outlandish treatment, it is time to remember Peter's warning anew and beware lest we wrest this scripture.

*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; 16 as also in all (his) epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as (they do) also the other*

*scriptures, unto their own destruction. 17 Ye therefore, beloved, knowing (these things) beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness. 2 Pet 3:15-18*

All we have to work with are the definition of the terms, the context of the section, and other Scriptures that teach on this subject. This alone can chart our course through obviously dangerous ground. The path truly is straitened and narrow that leads to the truth on this passage of Scripture. We must be wise here and definitely not “in our own conceits.”

What do we have to work with? As noted above, the prevailing theme of this context is to reveal to the Gentiles of that day something that would help them to not be wise in their own conceits or highminded, but instead lead them back to the attitude Paul had of desiring their salvation. A hardness had in part taken place and it would continue until the fulness of the Gentiles came in. Our goal is to discover three things. First, what is the fulness of the Gentiles? Second, when will this fulness occur? Third, what will happen next?

In trying to discover what “the fulness of the Gentiles” refers to, we must avoid the extremes of the above. Although the definition of the term is helpful, it has too much ambiguity to be forced too far.

*“pleroma,... 1. etymologically it has a passive sense, that which is(or has been)filled; very rarely so in class. Grk.: a ship, inasmuch as it is filled(i.e. manned) with sailors, rowers and soldiers... In the N. T. the body of believers, as that which is filled with the presence, power, agency, riches of God and of Christ... 2. that which fills or with which a thing is filled ...esp. of those things with which ships are filled, freight and merchandise, sailors, oarsmen, soldiers,... Of time... that portion of time by which a longer antecedent period is completed; hence completeness, fulness, of time... 3. fulness, abundance ... full number,” (Thayer, p. 518 4138)*

Fulness simply defines the confines of the discussion. Obviously when a ship is filled to capacity with grain, it does not have all the grain in the world. It holds a fulness of grain, but only within the limitations of that ship. So what about the fullness of the Gentiles? Does it mean all the Gentiles in the entire world? Does it mean all the Gentiles who fit the description of those who have been predestined and called? Is it just that generation or all future generations? These are reasonable questions. What saith the Scripture?

From Jesus in the sermon on the mount to Paul in the first chapter of the Corinthian letter as well as these very chapters, it has been emphasized that God expects only a small remnant.

*Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. 14 For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it. Matt 7:13-14*

*For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, (are called): 27 but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; 28 and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, (yea) and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: 29 that no flesh should glory before God. 1 Cor 1:26-29*

*6 But (it is) not as though the word of God hath come to nought. For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel: . . . 27 And Isaiah crieth concerning Israel, If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved: Rom 9:6, 27*

*5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. . . . What then? that which Israel seeketh for, that he obtained not; but the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened: Rom 11:5, 7*

Why would this passage change this? Why would we expect that this obscure passage would remove the truth? It is not credible to think that it would. Since we know that God only expected a remnant, it is that remnant that is the limitation of the term fulness. Just as a ships capacity limits the term fullness to that one ship so God designed the gospel to repel the arrogant and faithless and reach out to the group he selected in eternity. Those who do not fit his description are not a part of the fulness and never will be. The fulness of the Gentiles therefore is simply a way to designate those God had predestined and called. When all those had been brought in, then the condition described would have been fulfilled.

Is Paul then saying that at some future time all the Gentiles will be saved? Why would he say that when everything in the Scriptures reveals that there was no expectation of that happening? Is he

saying that a generation will come in which all the Gentiles will be saved? Why would he say that? These are not credible interpretations since they so clearly wrest the other Scriptures.

The only credible interpretation of the “fulness of the Gentiles” is the bringing in of all the possible converts. When the gospel had gone forth into all the world and the fulness of the Gentiles had been brought in then the condition here set forth would be satisfied. The only other issue would be whether Paul was only speaking of his own generation or whether this went out until the end of time. Although it certainly could stretch out further than that generation what would be gained?

The focus here is upon those Gentiles living at that time who were fulfilling Moses prophecy.

*They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; They have provoked me to anger with their vanities: And I will move them to jealousy with those that are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. Deut 32:21*

*I say then, Did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid: but by their fall salvation (is come) unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. Rom 11:11*

*But I speak to you that are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I glorify my ministry; 14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy (them that are) my flesh, and may save some of them. Rom 11:13-14*

When the fulness of the Gentiles came in during that generation, Israel was destroyed. The Israel of today is not truly Israel. There are no genealogical records. No one knows if Abraham’s blood flows in their veins. There is no priesthood, no one knows if Aaron’s or Levi’s blood flows within them. How can there be an Israel without that? With that in mind, the most logical and Scriptural understanding of this passage is that the condition of the Gentiles being brought in was completed in that generation when the gospel went into all the world and the Gentiles were fully brought into the church.

This brings us to our third question. What happens next? The term “until” is generally a particle that indicated the termination of something.

*“achri and achris... a particle indicating the terminus ad quem. ... It has the force now of a prep. now of a conj., even to; until, to the time that;... up to (Thayer, p. 91; 891).*

Whatever is being described about the hardening in part of Israel is going to continue “even to,” “until,” “to the time that,” or “up to” the fulness of the Gentiles. That is all that it says. It says nothing about what will happen next. What did happen was that Israel was destroyed by Rome less than 15 years after this book was written. The hardening ceased for most of them at that time when they were killed. For the rest, we simply have to leave that to God. It does not appear that it was his intent in revealing this mystery to explain that to us. It therefore belongs to him.

As stated above the context indicates that the purpose of this was to get those Gentiles at that time to stop being highminded and to see themselves as instruments through whom God was seeking to save more in Israel. The time was limited until the fulness of the Gentiles came in. Until that time arrived these Gentiles had an important mission. To provoke the hardened in Israel to jealousy and to hope that as many as possible could be saved. To do this they must be humble and take on the character Paul revealed about himself.

## **26 and so all Israel shall be saved;**

Grave consequences occur when we do not take the time to define a term before we give it a meaning. The term “so” is ambiguous in English. It can be taken as a conclusion and statement of fact, or as a manner or method. Ponder the clear Greek term.

*“houto... in this manner, thus, so; 1. by virtue of its native demonstrative force it refers to what preceded; in the manner spoken of; in the way described; in the way it was once; in this manner; in such a manner; thus so... (Thayer, p. 468-469; 3779)*

The term refers back to what precedes and states that this is the manner or way that something is going to be accomplished. It is in the manner described in the previous passage that all Israel is going to be saved. What then is that manner? What way has Paul just finished describing? If we go back to the beginning of chapter 9 and ponder the way described what composite do we see about the manner in which Israel shall be saved?

they are not all Israel, that are of Israel: Rom 9:6

it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed. Rom 9:8

If the number in Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved: Rom 9:27

Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at (that) law. Wherefore? Because (they sought it) not by faith, Rom 9:31-32

they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth. Rom 10:2-4

if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus (as) Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: 10 for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Rom 10:9-10

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 But if it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. 7 What then? that which Israel seeketh for, that he obtained not; but the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened: Rom 11:5-7

by their fall salvation (is come) unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. Rom 11:11

if by any means I may provoke to jealousy (them that are) my flesh, and may save some of them. Rom 11:14

Thou wilt say then, Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. 20 Well; by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not highminded, but fear: Rom 11:19-20

Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. 23 And they also, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. Rom 11:22-23

He made it abundantly clear in the Ninth chapter that God's word would not be voided in any way by only a small portion of Israel being saved. Not all who are in Israel are of Israel and only the children of promise are reckoned as the seed. Even if Israel became as the sand by the seashore, only the remnant would be saved. The problem was simply Israel was not seeking God by faith. Their zeal was not according to knowledge and they refused to recognize that only a belief in the Christ could bring them the fulness of the Law's purpose.

All Israel must confess Jesus as Lord and believe in their heart that God raised him from the dead. These were the remnant according to grace. The rest were hardened in part. But there was still hope that some might still be saved by provoking them to jealousy. They were broken off as branches because of unbelief, but if they would repent and continue not in unbelief God was still able to graft them in again.

This is the manner in which all Israel will be saved. To validate his point, and prove that the above is what he had in mind, look at the Scriptures he quotes.

### **even as it is written There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer;**

*And a Redeemer will come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith Jehovah. 21 And as for me, this is my covenant with them, saith Jehovah: my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith Jehovah, from henceforth and for ever. Isa 59:20-21*

This is such a powerful chapter to the context of this section. It began with God's rebuke to Israel. His had was not too short to save them nor his ear unable to hear their cries. Their sins had separated them from God(59:1-2). A description of the depths of their wickedness shows their desperate situation. They were exceedingly corrupt and evil(59:3-15). God sought for a man to intercede for them and could not find one. So he did it himself(59:16-17) with the promise to repay evil to those who have done evil. It is at this point that the promise above is given. Though the people were corrupt and evil, God still promised to send them a redeemer and deliverer. This had been done exactly as this prophecy outlined.

### **He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:**

This deliverer would find it necessary to "turn away" ungodliness from Jacob.

*"apostrepho... 1. to turn away... to remove anything from any one... simply to turn him away from allegiance to anyone, tempt to defection... 2. to turn back, return, bring back... 3. intrans. to turn one's self away, turn back,*

return... 4. mid., ... to turn one's self away from... Titus 1:14; in the sense of *deserting...*" (Thayer, p. 68; 654)

It is clear from this that what the redeemer would find when he came to Israel was the same ungodliness and wickedness that Isaiah was contending with. Jesus did what he could before they put him to death, but after his death he has continued to turn away the "ungodliness" in Israel.

"*asebeia...(asebes q.v.) want of reverence toward God, impiety, ungodliness...*" (Thayer p. 79; 763)

Israel did not reverence God when he arrived. They did not show God respect and honor. Those who had not yet come to him were still not showing that reverence. But he did not come to cast them off, but to turn away their ungodliness. Remember again the context. Paul is exhorting these Gentiles to get involved in this same work. Jesus did not come to call just the righteous, he came to call the sinners. These Gentiles must also work with these sinners.

*And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are in health have no need of a physician; but they that are sick. 32 I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Luke 5:31-32*

## **27 And this is my covenant unto them, When I shall take away their sins.**

*Therefore by this shall the iniquity of Jacob be forgiven, and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin: that he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, (so that) the Asherim and the sun-images shall rise no more. Isa 27:9*

Once again it is the context of this prophecy that makes it so powerful. He begins by describing God's punishment of Israel. He has not punished them fully, but only with the idea of bring about this prophecy of repentance and forgiveness(27:6-9). After this prophecy he continues to describe punishment of those who will not repent but the great hope that more will repent. Ponder the final two verses of the chapter as it contains exactly the same thoughts as are being expressed here.

*And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will beat off (his fruit) from the flood of the River unto the brook of Egypt; and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. 13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come that were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and they that were outcasts in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain at Jerusalem. Isa 27:6-13*

In that day(the day Paul lived) they would be gathered out one by one and those who had been ready to perish and those who were outcasts will come and worship Jehovah. This is exactly what Paul was hoping these Gentiles would become actively involved in. The redeemer one by one would take away their sins.

## **28 As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake:**

"As touching" describes the relationship that the Jews have toward Christians because of the gospel.

"*kata...* II with the Accusative... 3. it denotes reference, relation, proportion, of various sorts; a. distributively, indicating a succession of things following one another... b... *as respects; with regard to; in reference to; so far as relates to; as concerning;*...c. *according to, agreeably to;* in reference to agreement or conformity to a standard, in various ways (aa) *according to anything as a standard, agreeably to...*(bb) *in proportion to, according to the measure of...*" (Thayer, p. 328; 2596)

It is only in reference to the gospel that they are enemies. It is the gospel that is on the one side of the balance that is creating the hatred and hostility which is on the other side of the balance.

*echthros...* a hater 1. passively, *hated, odious, hateful...* 2. actively, *hostile, hating and opposing another...*" (Thayer, p. 265; 2190)

The hostility, hatred and opposition that Israel was directing against Christians had a specific cause. It really was not even them. It was "for their sake," but it was in reference to the gospel.

*dia...* with the ACCUSATIVE. I. of Place; *through...* II of the Ground or Reason on account of which anything is or is not done; *by reason of; because of...*" (Thayer p. 134; 1223)

The reason why there was hatred and animosity directed against them had to do with the gospel. This was another thing that these Gentile Christians had to understand in order to avoid the wrong feelings or conclusions. It was not personal. It had nothing to do with them personally. It was the gospel that the Jews were hostile toward and anyone who obeyed the gospel was therefore

immediately their enemy. The hatred was directed at the gospel.

### **but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake.**

With exactly the same Greek terms, the Spirit sets out God's feelings toward the Jews. Once again he begins with a "kata" to set up the two sides of a balance. This time it is the election that is on one side of the balance and being beloved that is on the other side of the scale. These hardened and wicked Jews are beloved for the sake of (*dia -by reason of because of*) the father's. Again, it was not personal. God's feelings toward these people had to do with promises and commitments made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God is faithful regarding his promises. God had promised Abraham that he would bless his seed and God was very careful and concerned about that.

Because the fathers had been beloved in the eyes of God, these offspring though evil and wicked were still of concern to him. They are beloved because of promises made to the fathers. When God sees them, he sees them in light of the promises he made to their fathers. He must in righteousness destroy them for the sins, but still he loves them and wishes it could be otherwise.

### **29 For the gifts and the calling of God are not repented of.**

The reason and cause for the above is emphasized with a (*for/gar*). God had offered precious gifts to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When he called them to serve him and promised them that he would care for their offspring, he meant it. It was not something that God would repent or regret later. As was pointed out in Hebrews. God was so intense in his desire that man understand this about him that he swore with an oath.

*For when God made promise to Abraham, since he could swear by none greater, he swore by himself, 14 saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. 15 And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men swear by the greater: and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation. 17 Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: 19 which we have as an anchor of the soul, (a hope) both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil; Heb 6:13-19*

God intended to keep this promise, but he wanted to show the heirs of that promise the immutability of his counsel. It is that immutable counsel which God will not repent of. Though the offspring might fail him, and he might have to punish them for their sins, the calling(class) is not. God loved Israel. He promised to bless and help them. Though these individuals were unworthy, he still wanted to bless them if he could get them to repent. This is what all Christians in that age must understand about the amazing paradox that they were seeing. The Jew were wicked, corrupt, and evil. Yet God wanted to bless them. This was the reason why.

God call to Abraham and the gifts he had promised him if he would fulfill his part had long ago been set in stone. Abraham had done what God asked so God was even up to that moment after the rejection of Jesus still seeking to bring more of Abraham's seed into the fold. God had always looked to that nation in hopes of blessing it, and ever he was thwarted by their own ungodliness. Even then God would have given them everything if they had repented. He gave them priority in that the gospel always came to them first. They were a prepared people. God wanted to give them gifts, but they refused to accept them.

### **30 For as ye in time past were disobedient to God,**

Again, remember the context! Paul is seeking to destroy any feelings of pride or an attitude of contempt toward Israel by these converted Gentiles. They must be made to see the whole picture. With a *for/gar* he offers **this** as an additional reason or cause. With the "as" he points out that there is an exact parallel that they are now to ponder.

*"hos-per... fr. hos and the enclitic particle per which "in its usual way, augments and brings out the force of hos..." from Hom. down just as, even as... a. in a protasis with a finite verb, and followed by houtos or houtos kai in the apodosis..." (Thayer, p. 682-683; 5618)*

Just as you were once in times past “disobedient” to God, now we see them in exactly the same position.

“*apeitheo... not to allow oneself to be persuaded; not to comply with; a. to refuse or withhold believe*(in Christ, in the gospel; ...)... b. *to refuse belief and obedience...*” (Thayer p 55; 544)

You refused to be persuaded at one time, you would not comply with God’s desires, you refused and withheld your belief. All Gentiles had come out of the darkness of rebellion and ungodliness. They knew this was true. It ought to make the humble and more concerned about those who were still in that plight while at the same time making them less concerned about how they were being treated.

### **but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience,**

Now, an entirely different set of circumstances had occurred. Because Israel had crucified their Messiah in exact accord with God’s plan, the gospel could now be preached to the entire world and mercy could be offered to the Gentiles. It was their act of disobedience in crucifying Jesus that had brought them mercy and compassion.

“*eleeo... (eleos)... Sept. most freq. for ... to be gracious, also for ... to have mercy; several times for... to spare and ... to console; to have mercy on... to succor one afflicted or seeking aid... absol. to succor the afflicted, to bring help to the wretched [ A. V. to show mercy], ... pass. to experience [A. V. obtain] mercy,... Syn. eleeo, oikteiro: el. to feel sympathy with the misery of another, esp. such sympathy as manifests itself in act, less freq. in word; whereas oikt. denotes the inward feeling of compassion which abides in the heart...*” (Thayer, p. 203; 1653)

The Gentiles must not look at the Jewish fall with any glee, joy, contempt or animosity. It was God’s plan, and they were not in any better position than the Jews. There was only one difference between them. God had shown them mercy because they had obeyed. He still wanted to show the Jews mercy because of promises made to the fathers. Let them look at their own dismal failure and God’s mercy toward them and feel gratitude. Let them look at the Jews with pity because they had not yet see the truth, then do whatever they could to bring it about.

### **31 even so have these also now been disobedient,**

In exactly the same manner described above, so now these have been disobedient.

“*houto... in this manner, thus, so; 1. by virtue of its native demonstrative force it refers to what preceded; in the manner spoken of; in the way described; in the way it was once; in this manner; in such a manner; thus so...*” (Thayer, p. 468-469; 3779)

The roles have been entirely reversed and you find yourself in favor with God and the Jews are now “disobedient.”

“*apeitheo... not to allow oneself to be persuaded; not to comply with; a. to refuse or withhold believe*(in Christ, in the gospel; ...)... b. *to refuse belief and obedience...*” (Thayer p 55; 544)

It is the Jews who now refuse to be persuaded, who will not comply with God’s desires, who refuse and withhold their belief.

### **that by the mercy shown to you they also may now obtain mercy.**

Consider well the great position you are now in. You now have the opportunity to become their benefactors. You can by your godly life and merciful view of them provoke them to wonder and jealousy. This may well bring persecution upon yourselves, but it will also as it had for Paul give them the opportunity to reach some.

This was the exact purpose that God had in mind in doing it this way!

“*hina... I. An adverb of place,... a. where; in what place. b. in what place; whither... II a final conjunction(for from local direction, indicated by the adverb, the transition was easy to mental direction or intention)denoting purpose and end: to the intent that; to the end that, in order that;... it is used 1. prop of the purpose or end;...” (Thayer, p. 302-304; 2443)*

The mercy that had been “shown to them” was now to be used for another purpose.

*humeteros (humeis), possessive pronoun of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person. Plural, your, yours; a. possessed by you... b allotted to you... c. proceeding from you...*” (Thayer p. 637; 5212)

God allotted this mercy to them not only to save them, but also that they also might now obtain mercy. This is the real purpose of this entire section. God wanted the Gentiles to see their true role in the church. Though they were being persecuted and mistreated, there was a high and noble purpose. Even at that time God was using them to gain more of Abraham's seed back to bless and show them mercy. What an honor God had given them.

### **32 For God hath shut up all unto disobedience,**

With a final *for/gar* the Spirit now sums up. This is the reason and cause of the previous verse. The Gentiles must see this higher purpose and goal. After Jesus was crucified, God "shut up" all unto disobedience.

*sugkleio... To shut up... i.e. a. to shut up together, to enclose; ... a shoal of fishes in a net... b. to shut up on all sides, to shut up completely ... so to deliver one up to the power of a person or thing that he is completely shut in, as it were without escape..."* (Thayer p. 593; 4788)

The temple veil was torn, walls were slammed down, and all were enclosed and completely shut in. They were all "disobedient."

*"apeitheia... disobedience... obstinacy, and in the N. T. particularly obstinate opposition to the divine will... those who are animated by this obstinacy..."* (Thayer, p. 55; 543)

The Gentiles were already there and the Jews placed themselves there after the crucifixion. There was no escape. Everyone was "obstinate" in their "opposition to the divine will." God placed everyone here. Not to punish and mete out judgement, but exactly the opposite.

### **that he might have mercy upon all.**

With another *hina the intent, end and order* of God's purpose is set forth. He did this so he might show mercy upon all. This is how the Gentiles must view the mercy shown to them and the need for mercy to be shown to those who were still in rebellion. This is the purpose of the book of Romans. It's depths are only there to help us comprehend how involved all of this is. God wants to save. That is his goal. He wants to be merciful. We must join with him in this. We must hold ourselves back from any pride of life that might enter in after obedience to the gospel gradually leads us to a higher level of spirituality than those we have left behind. Our goal is to bring mercy to all.

### **33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!**

As Paul now sums up his own inspired feelings regarding what has just been revealed, he begins with the interjection "O."

*"o, an interjection prefixed to vocatives... a. in address... b. in exclamation: and that of admiration..."* (Thayer, p. 678; 5599)

Paul is in awe of what God has done. He speaks of the "depth" and the "riches" of God's wisdom.

*"bathos... depth height,... [acc. As measured down or up]; 1. Prop... of 'the deep' sea... 2. Metaph... deep, extreme, poverty... the deep things of God... things hidden and above man's scrutiny... inexhaustible abundance, immense amount..."* (Thayer, p. 92; 899)

*"ploutos,... riches, wealth; a. prop. and absol. abundance of external possessions... b. univ. fullness, abundance, plenitude ..."* (Thayer, p. 519; 4149)

These are superlative terms to emphasize immensity. God's wisdom is inexhaustible, abundant, deep, full, rich. Paul can say no more. God's "wisdom" and "knowledge" extend far above man's ability to comprehend.

*"sophia... wisdom, broad and full intelligence,... used of the knowledge of very diverse matters, so that the shade of meaning in which the word is taken must be discovered from the context in every particular case... a. the wisdom which belongs to men... the varied knowledge of things human and divine, acquired by acuteness and experience... an acquaintance with divine things and human duties, joined to a power of discoursing concerning them and interpreting and applying sacred Scripture... b. supreme intelligence, such as belongs to God... also to Christ, exalted to God's right hand... the wisdom of God as evinced in forming and executing his counsels..."* (Thayer, p. 581-582 4678)

*“gnosis... knowledge... the knowledge of God, such as is offered in the gospel... gnosis by itself signifies in general intelligence, understanding... The general knowledge of the Christian religion... The deeper, more perfect and enlarged knowledge of this religion, such as belongs to the more advanced... moral wisdom, such as is seen in right living... and in intercourse with others... objective knowledge: what is known concerning divine things and human duties...”* (Thayer, p. 119; 1108)

The wisdom of God and the knowledge of God are so great so profound and so incomprehensible, that Paul speaks of them in this way. Wisdom is knowledge in application. As one ponders what has been revealed of God’s wisdom and knowledge since the beginning of the book, one has to stand back in awe and respect for what God has done.

### **how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!**

Here is the specific source of Paul’s praise and adoration. As he has set forth the inscrutable mysteries of God’s plan through the inspiration of the Spirit, even he has to admit that they rise up above his ability to “search” or trace out.

*“anexereunetos... (a privative and exereunao), that cannot be searched out...”*(Thayer p. 44; 619)

*“exereunao... to search out, search out anxiously and diligently...”* (Thayer p. 222; 1830)

Paul can set them forth as far as the Spirit has revealed them, but the “judgments” that have been set forth in this book are far beyond man’s ability to fully see. No matter how anxiously and diligently one puts forth his efforts, they will continue to elude. They are far too deep for man to grasp. They simply cannot be traced out or comprehended.

*“anexichniastos ... a privative and exichniasto to trace out), that cannot be traced out, that cannot be comprehended.”* (Thayer p. 44; 421)

God’s judgments and ways as set forth in Romans regarding his love for fallen man and his desire to save them through the sacrifice of the innocent Christ. His plan to create within the Jews a jealousy that would bring them back to him through the Gentiles, reveal a mind, a way of assessing and judging and a mode of thinking feeling and deciding that are simply beyond the scope of man’s imagination. We must accept these things by faith and then struggle to bring out own hearts back to the divine nature.

*“krima... 1. a decree... judgments;... 2. judgment i.e. condemnation of wrong, the decision (whether severe or mild) which one passes on the faults of others... In a forensic sense, the sentence of a judge... of the punishment to which one is sentenced... where the justice of God in punishing is to be shown, krima denotes condemnatory sentence, penal judgment, sentence... 3. a matter to be judicially decided, a lawsuit, a case in court...”* (Thayer, p. 360; 2917)

*“hodos... a way; 1. properly a. a travelled way, road:... b. a traveller’s way, journey, travelling... 2. Metaphorically a. according to the familiar figure of speech, especially frequent in Hebrew... and not unknown to the Greeks by which an action is spoken of as a proceeding, ...hodos denotes a course of conduct, a way(i.e. manner) of thinking, feeling, deciding... b. in the saying of Christ ego eime he hodos I am the way by which one passes, i.e. with whom all who seek approach to God must enter into closest fellowship, Jn 14:6...”* (Thayer, p. 437-438)

### **34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord?**

With a *for-gar* he further explains the previous verse. After reading the previous eleven chapters, who could say that they knew any of this? Who could say that the mind of the Lord was an easy thing to know. The mind of God is infinite, and no one knows it.

*but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, (even) the (wisdom) that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory: 8 which none of the rulers of this world hath known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory: 9 but as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And (which) entered not into the heart of man, Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. 1 Cor 2:7-9*

### **or who hath been his counsellor**

God has never sought counsel from man. Those who have sought to give it have fallen far short of even understanding God. The counsel of Job and Jonah missed the mark. Man does not have the ability to counsel God for his ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts. No one was there with God before the beginning to counsel God.

### **35 or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?**

From Adam and Eve to the present moment, this has been impossible. No creature has anything to give to God except love and devotion. Everything else has been made by God. Who has ever first offered anything of value to God and then looked to God for repayment of a debt owed. The simple fact is that humanity has often treated God like that, but never with any basis or reason to do so.

### **36 For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things.**

Paul here uses three common Greek prepositions to emphasize that God role over all that exists. First, it is all “of” him.

“*ek*... It denotes as well exit or emission out of, as separation from, something with which there has been close connection; opp. to the preposition *eis* into and *en* in: *from out of, out from, forth from, from*... I. of PLACE,... II of the ORIGIN, SOURCE, CAUSE...” (Thayer, p. 189; 1537)

God is the “ORIGIN, SOURCE, and CAUSE” of all things. Nothing that we can see, hear, taste, touch, or smell is not from his hands. He is the author and originator of everything! All things are also “through” him.

“*dia*... A. with the GENITIVE: *through*... III. of the Means or Instrument by which anything is effected; because what is done by means of a person or thing seems to pass as it were through the same... 2. of the instrument used to accomplish a thing: or the instrumental cause in the stricter sense:... *by the service, the intervention of, by means of, with the help of*...” (Thayer, p. 132-135; 1223)

God is the “means or instrument” by which everything is effected. What he began at the creation(origin) he sustains in time. Everything that is occurring is through him. He is the means by which all that is good in our lives is brought about. Finally God is also the one “unto” whom are all things.

“*eis*,... a Prep. governing the Accusative, and denoting entrance into, or direction and limit: *into, to, towards, for, among*. It is used A. PROPERLY I. Of Place, after verbs of going, coming, sailing, flying, falling, living, leading, carrying, throwing, sending; 1. of a place entered or of entrance into a place; *into*... B. Used METAPHORICALLY, *eis* I. retains the force of entering into anything, II. *eis* after words indicating motion or direction or end; 1. It denotes motion to something, after verbs of going, coming, leading, calling etc. ... 2. of ethical direction or reference;... 3. it denotes the end; and a. the end to which a thing reaches or extends, i.e. measure or degree... b. the end which a thing is adapted to attain... c. the end which one has in view, i.e. object, purpose;... d. the end by which a thing is completed, i.e. the result or effect... (Thayer, p. 183-186; 1519).

God is the purpose and end of all things. Without God, there is no purpose for life. He gives things their reasons for existence and they either measure up to that purpose or are cast away.

### **To him (be) the glory for ever.**

To him be all the glory honor and praise for all this for all time. He is all. Everything in our lives has come from him is sustained through him and will go back to him. For this reason, he deserves our praise honor and adoration(as well as our submission and obedience) throughout this life and into eternity.

“*aion*... 1. *age ... a human lifetime ... life itself*... 2. *an unbroken age, perpetuity of time, eternity*... In the N. T. used 1. *for ever* ... 2. by metonymy of the container for the contained ... denotes *the worlds, the universe*, i.e. the aggregate of things contained in time....” (Thayer, p. 18; 165).

“*doxa*,... I. *opinion, judgment, view*... II ... in the sacred writings always, *good opinion* concerning one, and as resulting from that, *praise, honor, glory*... to give or ascribe glory to God, why and how being evident in each case from the context: thus, by declaring one’s gratitude to God for a benefit received,... so as to honor God, to promote his glory... III As a translation of the Hebrew in a use foreign to Greek writings... *splendor, brightness*; 1. ...of the sun, moon, stars,... used of the heavenly brightness, by which God was conceived of as surrounded,... 2. *magnificence, excellence, preeminence, dignity, grace*... 3. *majesty*; a. that which belongs to God; and b. the kingly majesty which belongs to him as the supreme ruler; ...” (Thayer p 155-156; 1391)

### **Amen.**

“*amen*,... 1. verbal adj. ... *firm, metaph. faithful*... 2. it came to be used as an adverb by which something is asserted or confirmed: a. at the beginning of a discourse, *surely, of a truth, truly*; so freq. in the discourses of Christ in Mt. Mk. and Lk.... the repetition of the word (*amen amen*), employed by John alone in his Gospel (twenty-five times), has the force of a superlative, *most assuredly*... b. at the close of a sentence; *so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled*... It was a custom which passed over from the synagogues into the Christian assemblies, that when

he who had read or discourse had offered up a solemn prayer to God, the others in attendance responded *Amen* and thus made the substance of the prayer their own..." (Thayer, p. 32; 281).



## Romans 12:1-8

### INTRODUCTION:

#### 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren,

As noted in the introduction the “therefore” has an important significance here. Though the verse has a very powerful point to make even standing alone, in reality, it is built upon the platform of the words and concepts of the previous chapters. It indicates “*something follows from another necessarily.*” “*In exhortations (to show what ought now to be done by reason of what has been said).*”

“*oun...* a conj. indicating something follows from another necessarily; ... Hence it is used in drawing a conclusion and in connecting sentences together logically, *then, therefore, accordingly, consequently, these things being so...*  
a. in exhortations (to show what ought now to be done by reason of what has been said) ... “ (Thayer, p. 463-464; 3767)

God has great hopes for what the Gentiles can accomplish for his chosen people. God has called them out of the darkness not only for salvation, but also in those days to provoke Israel to jealousy. God wanted them to understand their role in order that they might be clay in the hands of the potter.

1. *Israel stumbled and fell so salvation could come to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy. 11:11*
2. *If their fall, is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness 11:12*
3. *Paul glorified his ministry; if by any means he might provoke Israel to jealousy may save some of them. 11:13-14*
4. *if the casting away of them reconciled the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? 11:15*
5. *As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake. 11:28*
6. *The gifts and the calling of God are not repented of. 11:29*
7. *In time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, so now these have been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you they also may now obtain mercy. 11: 30-31*
8. *God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all. 11:32*

They must understand how powerful their proper response to Jewish persecution and hatred will create. God foresaw that this would be their last chance. They had not listened to Jesus or the apostles and prophets who had gone into all the world to preach to them. If they are to be reached, it will be through the jealousy they feel and the disobedience it has plunged them into. As they look at the good and loving people in the church it will create a powerful contrast. Paul himself had been deeply wounded by this contrast.

*And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad. 15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. Acts 26:14-15*

How Stephen dealt with his stoning and how those who were voted to be put to death responded to their punishment was a great goad that pricked and wounded Paul to the heart. Now these Gentiles have the chance to do the same thing for others who are lost. Peter says the same thing to those he wrote in his first epistle.

*But ye are a elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for (God's) own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: 10 who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 11 Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lust, which war against the soul; 12 having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that, wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Pet 2:9-12*

The Gentiles must perform their duty in regard to Israel(as we too must do today with the lost).

If they “glory over the branches that were broken off,” become “high minded” or “wise in their own conceits” (11:18-20; 25), a great opportunity is lost. Paul is beseeching them to see their role clearly and meet the challenge of persecution, tribulation etc with the proper response.

#### 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren,

There are few words in the Greek language that are as picturesque and soothing as the term here translated “beseech.”

“*parakaleo*... I. *to call to ones side, call for, summon*:... II. *to address, speak to*;... which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc. hence result a variety of senses... 1. *to admonish, exhort*;... 2. *to beg, entreat, beseech*; ...3. *to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort*;...4. *to encourage, strengthen*;...5. it combines the ideas of *exhorting and comforting and encouraging*;... 6. *to instruct, teach*...” (Thayer, p. 482-483; 3870)

In calling one to one’s side there is a strong emphasis on the personal interest and concern of the speaker. He is not remote and uncaring, he is right by their side. Depending on the circumstances it is translated exhort, console or encourage or admonish. When Paul uses this word he seeks to give the reader the sense of love and hope in his heart that these things will be done for the good of all.

Paul’s love and a desire for their best interest comes through these words as does his use of “brethren.”

“*adelphos*... (*from the same womb*)... 1. *a brother*(whether born of the same two parents, or only of the same father or the same mother... 2. according to a Heb use... *having the same nationally ancestor, belonging to the same people, countryman*;... 3. ...*any fellow-man* as having one and the same father with others, viz. God... 4. *a fellow-believer, united to another by the bond of affection*; so most frequently of Christians constituting as it were but a single family...” (Thayer, p. 10-11; 80)

Gentiles are “*no more strangers and sojourners, but are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God*,” (Eph 2:19). Paul considers these fellow believers to be his brethren and thus “*united to another by the bond of affection*.” He loves and cares about them even though he has never met them. His words continue to ring through the centuries to all of us who are also his brethren.

### **by the mercies of God,**

The motivation he hopes to use in his pleading exhortation centers God’s mercy. The preposition “by” is often used to identify the means or instrument by which something is effected or accomplished. So the Holy Spirit uses the mercy God had already given to them as the motivation for them to do something for God.

*For as ye in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, 31 even so have these also now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you they also may now obtain mercy. Rom 11:30-31*

It is this mercy that Paul appeals to. God had given great “*compassion, pity, mercy*” to them.

“*oiktirmos*... (the viscera, which were thought to be the seat of compassion...), *compassion, pity, mercy*:...bowels in which compassion resides, *a heart of compassion* ...in the Scriptures mostly plural...*emotions, longings, manifestations of pity*,” (Thayer p 442; 3628)

It is not possible after realizing how much God loves and pities us to feel that this is an unfair request. God wants everything from us, but it is not unfair considering what he has already given in the past and what he promises to give in the future.

*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 9 Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son (to be) the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 Jn 4:7-11*

It was God’s initiative, God’s plan and God’s action that has brought about all that now is. He paid the full price and now asks only that we supplement all that he has done by trusting him and giving our lives fully into his hands. No one who sits down to ponder and meditate upon all that the mercy of God has brought them can feel that what God here asks in return is in any way above and beyond what is fair and just.

### **to present your bodies a living sacrifice,**

Paul makes it very clear that this is a decision we have to make for ourselves. It is not something God takes, it is something we choose to give and we choose to do this after we are baptized. We decide how much and how deep this presentation actually is.

*“paristemi... a. to place beside or near... to set at hand; to present; to proffer; to provide... to place a person or thing at one’s disposal... Rom 6:13;...” (Thayer p 489;3936)*

Paul asks us to take our bodies and offer them to God. After dying with Jesus in baptism and raising with him to walk in newness of life, we are to reckon and calculate ourselves as being from that time forward dead to sin and alive to God and presenting the members of our body to God as alive from the dead.

*Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: 13 neither present your members unto sin (as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members (as instruments of righteousness unto God. Rom 6:11-13*

The Spirit now asks that we make the conscious decision to make our bodies a sacrifice. When the Hebrew Bible was translated into the Greek Septuagint this word was selected to translate the Hebrew words: “*offering, sacrifice*” or “*victim.*”

*“thusia... Septuagint for ... an offering and ...; a sacrifice, victim... “ (Thayer, p. 294; 2378)*

Under the law, an Israelite would choose an animal from his flock and devote him to God as a sacrifice. He chose to give up all that this animal could have done for him in order to present it to God. Under that law the sacrifice was then killed and the body and blood used to give thanks or seek forgiveness. Here Paul adds the word “*living*” to clarify exactly what God is seeking from us. This is not a one time sacrifice but a daily one. Each day our body must be placed in God’s presence to do what God has asked to be done. Whatever he must do or endure from that day forward is done as a response to this commitment. This is exactly how Paul described his own commitment to the Lord.

*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me: and that (life) which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, (the faith) which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me. 21 I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought. Gal 2:20-21*

His body no longer belonged to him. He had put to death his own desires and his own will, and would from that day onward only do what Christ wanted him to do. Each Christian as an individual must make this commitment to offer ourselves to God in this way.

*Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; 20 for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body. 1 Cor 6:19-20*

### **holy, acceptable to God,**

Once this commitment has been made, our bodies become “*holy.*”

*“hagios... 1. properly, reverend, worthy of veneration...a. of things which on account of some connection with God possess a certain distinction and claim to reverence as places sacred to God which are not to be profaned,... b. of persons whose services God employs; as for example, apostles... 2. set apart for God, to be as it were exclusively his... Just as the Israelites claimed for themselves the title *hoi hagioi*, because God selected them from the other nations to lead a life acceptable to him, and rejoice in his favor and protection... so this appellation is very often in the N. T. transferred to Christians as those whom God has selected ... 3. Of sacrifices and offerings ; prepared for God with solemn rite, pure, clean... 4. In a moral sense, pure, sinless, upright, holy...” (Thayer, p. 6-7; 39,40)*

This too was touched on by Paul earlier, Our members become set apart for God to use. We are now exclusively his, set apart for whatever need arises. Under this set of circumstances, we become “*acceptable*” and “*well- pleasing*” to God.

*“euarestos... eu, well, arestos, pleasing, is rendered “acceptable” in the A.V. ... The R.V. usually has “well-pleasing;”...” (Vine, Expository Dictionary, Vol 1, p. 20; 2101)*

The mercy and pity offered by God creates such gratitude and zeal in the hearts of those who obey the gospel that they want to do this. We love and respect God so much that we want to do all that

he asks us to do at whatever cost to ourselves. Those who are so moved by God's mercy and offer to be his living sacrifice become well pleasing to him.

*Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. 2 Cor 5:9  
proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord; Eph 5:10*

After so offering our bodies it is our duty to test and prove all things in order that all our words and deeds are done by the authority and approval of the Lord.

*And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Col 3:17*

### **(which is) your spiritual service.**

The act of giving our bodies to God as a living sacrifice is a "service."

*"latreia... 1. in Grk. auth. service rendered for hire; then any service or ministration... the service of God... 2. in the Greek Bible, the service or worship of God according to the requirements of the Levitical law. ..." (Thayer, p. 372; 2999)*

God considers this decision and the way in which we carry it out as a service or ministration to him. It is a means through which we offer him homage or worship. This term has a rich Old Testament heritage which Paul already touched on.

*who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service (of God), and the promises; 5 whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Rom 9:4-5*

God had revealed to Israel the exact plans for the tabernacle(temple) priesthood, sacrifices, and feast days. This was done after the pattern so that God would be pleased and honored by what they were doing for him. The Hebrew writer also emphasized this with the same word.

*Now even a first (covenant) had ordinances of divine service, and its sanctuary, (a sanctuary) of this world. 2 For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first, wherein (were) the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the Holy place. 3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies; 4 having a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein (was) a golden pot holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5 and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat; of which things we cannot now speak severally. 6 Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services; Heb 9:1-13*

This is a term with a rich heritage that as God's children and living sacrifices we need to fully understand.

It was first used to describe the responsibilities of the Passover feast that the Jews would continue to offer to God after they received the land of Canaan.

*And it shall come to pass, when ye are come to the land which Jehovah will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. 26 And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? 27 that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of Jehovah's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped. Exod 12:25-27*

Later it came to include all the work of the Levites keeping up the Sanctuary. Aaron and his sons had the service of the priesthood including animal sacrifices and all work within the tabernacle itself. The Kohathites carried the articles of furniture in the holy and most holy place, the Gershonites carried all the coverings and hangings that made up the tent tabernacle, and the Merarites moved all the boards and sockets that held it all together.

*Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. 7 And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle. 8 And they shall keep all the furniture of the tent of meeting, and the charge of the children of Israel,*

to do the **service** of the tabernacle. . . . 9 And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him on the behalf of the children of Israel. 10 And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall keep their priesthood: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. . . . 25 And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tent of meeting shall be the tabernacle, and the Tent, the covering thereof, and the screen for the door of the tent of meeting, 26 and the hangings of the court, and the screen for the door of the court, which is by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about, and the cords of it for all the **service** thereof. 30 And the prince of the fathers' house of the families of the Kohathites shall be Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. 31 And their charge shall be the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the screen, and all the **service** thereof. . . . 35 And the prince of the fathers' house of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail: they shall encamp on the side of the tabernacle northward. 36 And the appointed charge of the sons of Merari shall be the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof, and all the instruments thereof, and all the **service** thereof, 37 and the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords. Num 3:6-10, 25-26, 30-31, 35-37

Just before the Jews completed the conquest of the land of Canaan, the 2 ½ tribes acknowledged that their role in the service of Jehovah was in bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices to the altar.

*Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt-offering, nor for sacrifice: 27 but it shall be a witness between us and you, and between our generations after us, that we may do the **service** of Jehovah before him with our burnt-offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace-offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no portion in Jehovah. Josh 22:26-27*

Israel recognized God had called them to do the work of service to Jehovah through the Levites. Grievous consequences always followed when these **services** were not done exactly as God specified. Nadab and Abihu, Datham and Abiram, Saul's offering of the burnt offering, Uzzah's moving, then touching of the ark, Jeroboam's changing of the priesthood etc., and Uzziah's attempt to offer incense. Only those God had called to him to do the work of service were authorized to do so.

It is all the above that makes this term so important here. Christians have been called near to the Lord to offer up service to him just as the Levites. Their first duty in this capacity is to offer up their own body as a living sacrifice. Their second to be certain all is done exactly as God has asked it to be done.

There has been some difference of opinion on the part of the translators whether the Greek term "logikos" should be understood as *spiritual service*(ASV, NAS, NIV) or as a *reasonable one*(KJV, NKJ). The word is only used here and in Peter and neither of these help pinpoint its meaning.

*as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation; 1 Pet 2:2*

So we look at the definition and are again not given a clear reason to choose either.

*"logikos... rational... agreeable to reason, following reason, reasonable... Rom 12:1; ... the milk which nourishes the soul... 1 Pet 2:2..." (Thayer, P. 379; 3050)*

*logikos a. with ref to *legein*, "belonging to speech"... b. with ref to *logos*, "belonging to the reason," "rational." In this sense, it is a favourite term in Greek philosophy, esp. among the Stoics. ... The term does not occur in the LXX or Joseph.... "belonging to the sphere of the *logos* or reason," "spiritual," (Kittel vol 4 p. 142)*

As Kittel makes clear both translations are a reasonable way to translate the term. The term is not used in the Septuagint, so we have no other means of knowing except how it is defined. There is another term for spiritual "*pneumatikos*" and the general meaning of "*logikos*" is logic and reason. Yet only the KJV/NKJV uses *reasonable*. The ASV/NASB/ESV/NIV all have *spiritual*.

Since both fit well into the context of either passage and both are scriptural and taught elsewhere, there is no reason to prefer the one over the other. It is a *reasonable* service because after all God has done so we spend eternity with him what else makes sense but to do this? It is a *spiritual* service because once our bodies belong to him in this manner, all of our activities are going to be *spiritual* and *holy* in nature.

## **2 And be not fashioned according to this world:**

With the conjunction "*ka*" he makes this an additional responsibility to do because of the mercies

of God. Those who have given their bodies to God as a living sacrifice are no longer be “*fashioned*” according to this world.

*“suschematizo...to conform... to conform one’s self(i.e. one’s mind and character) to another’s pattern, [fashion one’s self according to,...Rom 12:2; 1 Pet 1:14...” (Thayer, p. 608; 4964).*

The basic idea behind conforming is not a negative one at all. It is the basic idea of imitating and using others as a pattern. It is how children learn to speak the language of their parents. It is how we learn to dress, eat, and live. It is how parents teach many moral and ethical principles. Unfortunately it is also how each of us learned to engage in sinful lusts. Using the same term, Peter warns strongly that we must not fashion ourselves after the former lusts of our flesh which learned while ignorant of God’s plan.

*Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as children of obedience, **not fashioning yourselves** according to your former lusts in (the time of) your ignorance: 15 but like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; 16 because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy. 1 Pet 1:13-16*

There is an understanding that comes from the previous eleven chapters(especially 1-3) that all have sinned and fallen short. Such conduct is unworthy of imitation, and everything done in this world must be suspected and assessed before continuing to do it.

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. 1 Jn 2:15-17*

*And you (did he make alive,) when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, 2 wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience; 3 among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest:-- Eph 2:1-3*

All that is in the world is not of the Father, but is of the world. The course of this world is the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience and leads to our being children of wrath. Everything done by the people of this world is therefore suspect. It is not to be engaged in until it is proved and tested.

*prove all things; hold fast that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil. 1 Th 5:21-22*

It just isn’t safe for us to follow anything done in the world without testing it first. Those who wish to be living sacrifices and well-pleasing to the Lord must understand that all they have done in the past, has been done in imitation of those in the world. We talk, dress, choose friends and entertainment, and speak based only upon this world’s standards. That is not enough for a living sacrifice. Peter says it very boldly.

*knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; 1 Pet 1:18*

After baptism everything must be suspected. No matter what we have learned and no matter where we learned it, it must be taken to the Scriptures and assessed by them. If we do not then we will never know if it is done in compliance to this world.

### **but be ye transformed**

With the stronger adversative “*alla*” the Spirit repudiates the above and offers the only acceptable alternative. To emphasize that this is not a small change the word “*transformed*” is used.

*“metamorphoo, to change into another form (meta, implying change, and morphe, form... is used in the passive voice (a) of Christ’s “transfiguration,” Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2; Luke (in 9:29) avoids this term, which might have suggested to gentile readers the metamorphoses of heathen gods, and uses the phrase *egeneto heteron*, “was altered”, lit., “became (*ginomai*) different (*heteros*)”; (b) of believers, Rom. 12:2, be ye transformed, the obligation being to undergo a complete change which, under the power of God, will find expression in character and conduct; *morphe* lays stress on the inward change, *schema*... the present continuous tenses indicate a process; 2 Cor. 3:18 describes believers as being “transformed (RV) into the same image” (I. e., of Christ in all His moral excellencies), the change being effected by the Holy Spirit.” (Vine’s Vol 4 p. 149; 3339)*

By using this term here and in the other passages mentioned, the Spirit wants us to understand that

we are fundamentally altering and changing our being when we comply with this. We are literally changing into another form. What God began in baptism we complete through the word of God. This term was big enough to describe what happened to Jesus when the apostles saw him change into another form.

*and he was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light. Mt 17:2*

*And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment (became) white (and) dazzling. Lk 9:29*

In the same way that Jesus was transfigured by the fashion of his countenance being altered, so now God offers those who want to become his living sacrifices the opportunity to have their countenance altered as well. This passage actually explains exactly how what Paul described in the Corinthian letter occurs.

*But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit. 2 Cor 3:18*

Paul is exhorting these Christians to take the necessary steps to become transformed into the image of the Lord. Peter using similar language speaks of taking on the divine nature.

*seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; 4 whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust. 2 Pet 1:3-4*

### **by the renewing of your mind,**

The means of this transformation, the means of assuring oneself that they are not doing things simply in conformity with the world is by “renewing” their mind.

*“anakainosis ... a renewal, renovation, complete change for the better,” (Thayer p. 38; 342)*

Our proverb “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks” is completely discredited. The mind of a Christian can be renovated and renewed. It can be brought back to the pristine beauty and form that it had in the garden. We may or may not have the time, fortitude or drive to do it, but it can be done. The point is clear, if we are to be a holy living sacrifice for God’s use then we must renew our minds.

Everything in the mind must be proved and reassessed. Nothing can be overlooked everything must be scrutinized. We really can not trust anything learned before becoming a Christian.

### **that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

The Spirit uses *eis - in order that; for the purpose of* to emphasize the purpose and result of all this. The purpose of our desire to stop being conformed and start the process of metamorphosis is in order that we might prove and test. This is the purpose of a renewed mind, It is the end and object of what a renewed mind will do. Renewed minds “*prove*” what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

*“dokimazo... to try 1. to test, examine, prove, scrutinize( to see whether a thing be genuine or not), as metals... 2. to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy.” (Thayer, p. 154; 1381).*

They test, examine, prove and scrutinize everything(thought word and deed) they encounter. All must be re-assessed, if it is not recognized as genuine after this examination, then it is rejected. If it passes this test then it is approved and deemed worthy. Only by doing this can we be certain that we are doing the “*will*” of God.

*thelema,... will, i.e. a. what one wishes or has determined shall be done, [i.e. objectively, thing willed]... [...act of willing, the subjective] will, choice... inclination, desire...” (Thayer, p. 285; 2307)*

This is the daunting task of all who would give their bodies as a living sacrifice. Like Jesus before them, they are now here only to do what God wishes or has determined shall be done.

*Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work. John 4:34*

*I can of myself do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. John 5:30*

*For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. John 6:38*

*Then said I, Lo, I am come (In the roll of the book it is written of me) To do thy will, O God. Heb 10:7*

Yet how can one be a true living sacrifice unless he can identify the will of God in each and every circumstance? We must gain the wisdom to prove and test everything and determine the will of God. This will have both a doctrinal, moral and practical component. The key to being a living sacrifice is to not seek or do our own will but the will of God. Not to accomplish our own work, but the work of God. For this reason we must test and approve all that is God's will. We must avoid error and false doctrine, immorality and other foolish notions and wisdom of this age. The end of being a living sacrifice and of changing form and renewing the mind is that we be able to test and approve of the things that actually are God's will.

Some difficulty in translation has led to different word orders in the various translations. The Greek simply says "what the will of God the good, and acceptable and perfect"

*that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (ASV)*

*that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (KJV)*

*that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (NAS)*  
*discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (ESV)*

The ESV and NAS retain the Greek order and express more accurately what was said. Giving the proper emphasis to "the will of God." Once we know the will of God is (through the Scriptures), then we know what is good, what is acceptable, and what is perfect. Only knowing God's will on any subject will give us that assurance. Only what God "wishes or has determined shall be done," is "good."

*"agathos... excelling in any respect, distinguished, good. It can be predicated of persons, things, conditions, qualities and affections of the soul, deeds, times and seasons.... 1. of good constitution or nature... 2. useful, salutary... 3. of the feeling awakened by what is good, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy... 4. excellent, distinguished... 5. upright, honorable... upright, free from guile, particularly from a desire to corrupt the people... pre-eminently of God, as consummately and essentially good... The neuter used substantively denotes 1. a good thing, convenience, advantage, ... 2. what is upright, honorable, and acceptable to God..." (Thayer, p. 2-3; 18)*

When we know God's feelings on each individual thing in our minds, we are then prepared to pronounce it good, distinguished and excelling. Only God can tell us if something is of good constitution. It does not matter how we feel about any matter. Those with a renewed mind know that only those things God has expressed his will favorably upon can be good, and only those things can be "acceptable" to him.

*"euarestos... eu, well, arestos, pleasing, is rendered "acceptable" in the A.V. ... The R.V. usually has "well-pleasing;"..." (Vine's Expository Dictionary, Vol 1, p. 20; 2101)*

This term is repeated from the previous verse. Only when we present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God and cease from doing things just to be conformed and fashioned to this world can we be acceptable and well-pleasing to him. God wants us to see him in the light Paul described in the previous chapter. All things are "of him, through him and unto him." We must identify them and then approve only of them. In this way we will accept only what is "perfect."

*"teleios,...prop. brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect... substantively, that which is perfect consummate human integrity and virtue... of men, full-grown, adult; of full age, mature,... the perfect, i.e. the more intelligent, ready to apprehend divine things... of mind and character, one who has reached the proper height of virtue and integrity..." (Thayer, p. 618; 5046)*

Every good and perfect gift that has come down from God is perfect. The perversions this world has sought out must be avoided and destroyed. If we wish to live a complete and perfect life then we must prove the will of God.

*After this manner therefore pray ye. Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Mt 6:9-10*

**3 For I say, through the grace that was given me,**

With a *for/gar*, Paul gives an additional reason and cause to give careful heed to the above. The preposition “*through/dia*” is often used to identify the means or instrument by which something is effected or accomplished. Hence it is through the instrument of the grace that was given to Paul that he was now able to give this additional reason. Paul had made some reference to this at the very beginning of the epistle.

*concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 who was declared (to be) the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; (even) Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake; Rom 1:3-5*

But unless they knew Paul well, or Phoebe had this information from her own knowledge of Paul, they would ponder over this to grasp its full meaning. Before commenting further, ponder the following verses that outline Paul's feelings and understanding of the grace that was given to him.

*But I write the more boldly unto you in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God, 16 that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus unto the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 17 I have therefore my glorifying in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God. 18 For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, Rom 15:15-18*

*I thank him that enabled me, (even) Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to (his) service; 13 though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; 14 and the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 15 Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief: 16 howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all his longsuffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life. 1 Tim 1:12-16*

*and last of all, as to the (child) untimely born, he appeared to me also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 1 Cor 15:8-10*

Because Paul had not done the above(proved the will of God), he had violated it. He had been a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious. He had done many things contrary to the Lord Jesus.

*I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. 11 And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities. Acts 26:9-11*

Only mercy and grace freely offered to him in the past gave him any right to write this letter to them. By grace he was an apostle, but in examining that grace, Paul was in a twofold position to give this next warning. First, because of the grace that was given to him he was an apostle of Jesus Christ and as such had the inspiration and authority to be heard. But it seems to me that under the circumstances set forth in these first three verses that he has an even more powerful point to make.

So of all people who needed the warning Paul was about to give Paul needed it the most. From Paul's perspective no one had thought more highly of himself in the wrong way as he himself! Before he became a Christian Paul saw himself as the very best with plenty to brag about and considered himself to be very special. He even saw his persecution of the church and attempts to destroy Christians as a badge of honor.

*For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it: 14 and I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. Gal 1:13-14*

*Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. 19 For ye bear with the foolish gladly, being wise (yourselves). 20 For ye bear with a man, if he bringeth you into bondage, if he devoureth you, if he taketh you (captive), if he exalteth himself, if he smiteth you on the face. 21 I speak by way of disparagement, as though we had been weak. Yet whereinsoever any is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am bold also. 22 Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as one beside himself) I more; in labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft. 2 Cor 11:18-23*

*I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And this I also did in Jerusalem: and I both shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. 11 And punishing them oftentimes in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities. Acts 26:9-11*

*though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. 7 Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Phil 3:4-7*

But in an act of mercy beyond belief, God gave Paul grace. We will never know all that Paul prayed and thought during those three days of blindness but one thing is certain, he saw clearly what a fool he had been and what a wonderful gift God had given him. He never forgot it!

*I thank him that enabled me, (even) Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to (his) service; 13 though I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: howbeit I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief; 14 and the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 15 Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief: 16 howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all his longsuffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life. 1 Tim 1:12-16*

*and last of all, as to the (child) untimely born, he appeared to me also. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 1 Cor 15:8-10*

As the perfect example of what can happen when one thinks highly of himself than he ought to think. Paul had learned how dangerous pride and arrogance were. So now, because of the grace that was given to him he could warn them of the grave dangers that such an attitude could lead to and no one was exempt from it.

There is no one who does not need to hear and heed this warning. Everyone has something that makes them feel special and important and the devil can use them as he did against Paul. Everyone must keep things in proper perspective. Our gifts were given not earned.

A transformed and living sacrifice proving the will of God will never lose sight of this truth. There is no place for pride in a renewed mind. We are created in God's image. All that we were given at birth is simply a gift from God to be used for our enjoyment and his glory. Those who have been redeemed and know what it means to be redeemed can never see anything as being their own. Nothing we have or can accomplish can be seen outside of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Anyone who thinks of himself as being something more than he is truly, is not of sound mind and is not thinking soberly.

This wisdom comes from a man who was nearly destroyed by it! All valuations of ourselves comes from the word of God. We are to think of ourselves exactly as the Bible reveals us to be. Paul had learned how dangerous pride and arrogance actually were. So now, because of the grace that was given to him he could warn them of the grave dangers that such an attitude could lead to and no one was exempt from it.

**to every man that is among you,**

There is no one who does not need to hear and heed this warning. "Every" person in the church needed to apply this warning.

*"pas,... I. adjectivally, and 1. with anarthrous nouns; a. any, every one(sc. of the class denoted by the noun annexed to pas);... all or any of the class indicated... b. any and every, of every kind, ... II. without a substantive 1. masc. and fem. every one, any one... 2. everything, (anything) whatsoever;... always, perpetually,... in every condition, or in every matter, ... in everything, in every way, on every side, in every particular or relation,..." (Thayer, p. 491-493; 3956).*

This could just as easily be translated everyone(NAU, NKJ, NIV) as every man. The Greeks did not have to supply the noun and here they did not do so. In our gender sensitive age, everyone is

actually the better translation.

**not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly,**

Four times in this phrase the term “think” is used. All have the same root term though two have additional prepositions to expand the meaning of the term. The root term is defined:

*“phroneo to be minded in a certain way (phren, the mind), is rendered “to think,” in Rom. 12:3 (2nd and 3rd occurrences), RV, “not to think of himself more highly (huperphroneo, see No. 13) than he ought to think (phroneo); but so to think (phroneo) as to think soberly [sophroneo, see Note (3)];” the play on words may be expressed by a literal rendering somewhat as follows: “not to over-think beyond what it behooves him to think, but to think unto sober-thinking”; (Vine’s Vol 4 p. 127-128; 5426)*

*“phroneo... 1. to have understanding, be wise.... 2. to feel, to think... to have an opinion of ones self, think of one’s self... to think, judge...several persons are said phronein to auto, to be of the same mind, i.e. to agree together, cherish the same views, be harmonious... 3. to direct one’s mind to a thing, to seek or strive for, ... to seek one’s interests or advantage, to be of one’s party, side with him...” (Thayer, p 658; 5426)*

Man’s ability to reason, understand, feel and hold opinions about himself and others is his greatest ally in his quest to prove the what the will of God is. It is the lamp of the body through which all things are seen, judged and assessed.

*The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness! Mt 6:22-23*

*The lamp of thy body is thine eye: when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when it is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. 35 Look therefore whether the light that is in thee be not darkness. 36 If therefore thy whole body be full of light, having no part dark, it shall be wholly full of light, as when the lamp with its bright shining doth give thee light. Lk 11:34-36*

If this ability is to be kept in proper focus, then every Christian must learn not to “think more highly” than he ought to think.

*huperphroneo- to think more highly of oneself than is proper...” (Thayer p. 641; 5252)*

The preposition “*huper*” is to be over, above and beyond. Hence to think over, above and beyond is to view oneself in a light that is not appropriate. To avoid this, the Spirit advises that we “think soberly”

*“sophroneo... to be of sound mind, i.e. a. To be in one’s right mind of ... b. To exercise self-control; i.e. a. To put a moderate estimate upon one’s self, think of one’s self soberly... b. To curb one’s passions...” (Thayer, p. 612; 4993)*

*“sophron denotes of sound mind (sozo, to save, phren, the mind); hence self-controlled, sober minded, ...” (Vine, Vol. 4, p 44)*

God’s living sacrifices who are transformed and are proving his will must ever keep this danger in mind. It has destroyed multitudes of those who desired to serve him. Pride is simply not an attribute that the renewed mind can allow to exist. When one thinks of himself as being something more than he is, then he is not of sound mind and is not thinking soberly.

Every Christian is being advised by a man who was nearly destroyed by it to soberly evaluate what they have and what they are. We must evaluate ourselves with the word of God and renew our minds with respect to ourselves and our abilities. We are to think of ourselves exactly as the Bible reveals us to be. We are to consider our attributes exactly as the Lord explains them.

**according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith.**

With the term “according as” the Spirit bids us get out the balancing scales and make some comparisons.

*“hos... an adverbial form of the relative pronoun hos, he, ho, which is used in comparison, as, like as, even as, according as, in the same manner as, etc....” (Thayer, p. 680-682; 5613)*

Everything is in proportion to what God has dealt. Peter says exactly the same thing.

*according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; 11 if any man speaketh, (speaking) as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, (ministering) as of*

*the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Pet 4:10-11*

It is all a gift. Intelligence, strength, wisdom, personality, wealth, position, power and any other thing we consider to make us special! It is all and only a gift. If we can do it, it came from God. All we have we received! This is sober thinking.

*For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? but if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? 1 Cor 4:7*

We can only think soberly when we get out the balancing scales and place our opinion of ourselves on one side of the scale and on the other side place what God “has dealt” to each of us as a measure of faith.

*“merizo... to divide i.e. a. to separate into parts, cut into pieces... b. to distribute... a thing among persons... to bestow, impart...” (Thayer, p. 399-400; 3307)*

The truth here is simple. God has divided, separated or distributed, bestowed and imparted a measure of faith to “each” person.

*“hekastos... each, every; a. joined to a substantive... every... preceded by heis... every one: ...” (Thayer, p. 192;1538)*

Each member of the church must take the time to ponder this thought. If we are to properly do the will of God, and successfully give our bodies as living sacrifices to him, then we have got to understand this concept. The key to understanding this passage is the term “measure of faith.” The idea behind measure is fairly similar to English.

*“metron... measure 1. an instrument for measuring; a. a vessel for receiving and determining the quantity of things, whether dry or liquid:... b. a graduated staff for measuring, measuring-rod:... 2. determined extent, portion measured off, measure or limit...” (Thayer, p. 408; 3358)*

It is either the measuring cup or the portion inside the cup. It is the tape measure or the piece of wood cut after being measured. If it is the portion of faith God dealt and measured out to us, then God is responsible for how much faith we have. But this would contradict the entire theme of Romans. Rom 1:18-20 made it clear: those without faith are without excuse, not because God didn't portion it but because they refused to see it in the heavens. Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God (Rom 10:17). God does not measure out faith to Christians.

It is not because God did not mete it out to them, but because they refused to do what was necessary to obtain it. God wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. He cannot therefore be made responsible for the amount of faith each one has. The truth is that faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God (Rom 10:17). God does not measure out faith to Christians. Their own efforts determined the amount and extent of their faith. All have the same opportunity to believe in the existence of God, and hear his word. The measure of faith therefore cannot refer to the quantity of faith one holds toward God, Jesus, the Spirit, or the word.

A second possibility put forth is that the measure of faith refers to the miraculous gifts God bestowed through the Spirit and was given through the laying on of the apostle's hands. If that be the case, then 6 of the 7 things that follow would not fit the context, and Paul had already told them in the first chapter that many of them did not have these gifts yet.

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

The third and more contextually sound view is that this is not something that God measures out, but something that God measures with! Remember the definition of the term measure. It can be the device used for measuring or the portion measured out. If we understand this verse to be stating that God has dealt out to each person a means or device to measure out their faith, how does this fit the context?

God has given to each person a means for them to measure their faith. Twice in Abraham's lifetime God gave him the means to measure his faith. First by asking him to leave his country, and later by asking him to offer his son as a burnt offering. James uses the second one in his treatise on this very topic.

*Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith apart from (thy) works, and I by my works will show thee (my) faith. 19 Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; 23 and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. James 2:18-23*

Each opportunity to manifest one's faith through works is a chance to measure out that faith in a way that all can see it. But the strongest reason to accept this view comes from the text itself. What application does he make in the next few passages? With a *for/gar* he introduces the next few verses as the reason or explanation of this statement. His first illustration is the physical body which has many members but not the same office or responsibility. A hand does what the feet cannot but has no reason to boast, the legs do what the arms cannot, the eyes do what the ears cannot, the brain does what the heart cannot, but they do not boast over one another. God made them all and gave to each a job and the means to fulfill it. The goal to keep the body alive. So also Christ's body is made up of many members with abilities differing. Each person manifests and measures out his faith through the individual abilities God has given to him.

Regardless of the position anyone holds in the church of Jesus Christ, he/she has it because of the grace of God. We were all born with a body given to us by God, we were born with the intelligence we have given by God. All our abilities and all our possessions are a gift from God. We are saved by the grace of God, possess a gospel that imparts faith to all who hear it with an open heart by the grace of God. We should feel good about the things we accomplish, and we can glory in our relationship with the Lord, but to consider ourselves as something special, or a cut above others because we can do something better than they can is folly. God gave us these things so we could all measure out our faith and love for him with the bodies we have offered to him as a living sacrifice. Everyone has things that they do well. These are not reasons to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Sober and sound thinking requires us to acknowledge the truth of what the Spirit here reveals. Of him through him and to him are all things. What do we have that we did not receive, either from God at birth or through his grace in Christ?

*Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not (to go) beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other. 7 For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? but if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? 1 Cor 4:6-7*

#### **4 For even as we have many members in one body,**

With another term of comparison, we again get out our balancing scales.

*"kathaper (kath' haper), according as, just as, even as, [(“katha marking the comparison, per (akin to the prep. peri) the latitude of the application”)...]...” (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 312; 2509)*

As a way to elaborate and further explain his meaning the Spirit offers this illustration. Remember the *for/gar* forces us to see this illustration in the light of our duty to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, and to keep anyone from considering himself to be a cut above or special in some way that elevates them above another.

The human body has many members in one body. To list a few, each body has a brain, heart, hands, feet, fingers, toes, legs, arms, skin, blood, nerves, etc.

#### **and all the members have not the same office:**

Like the members in our own human body each one is given a different “measuring tape.” Paul illustrates his point with human body which has many members but not the same office or responsibility. A hand's work must be measured differently than the feet. The ear is measured differently than the eye. God made each of them and gave to each a job and the means to fulfill it. The manner in which the eye uses its gifts is how it will be measured. The way the ear uses its ability to hear will be the tape by which it is measured. In the same way the members in Christ's body have different abilities and gifts. Each person manifests and measures out his faith through the individual abilities God has given.

Regardless of the position anyone holds in the church it is the grace of God. We were all born with a body blessed by God with its abilities and strengths. It is these abilities and strengths through which, like Abraham, we measure our faith for God to see. We can feel good about the things we accomplish, and give glory to God, but we cannot consider ourselves to be special or above others because we do something better than others.

God gave us the things we can do and we measure out our faith by doing them. This is how we give our body as a living sacrifice. Far from a reason to think more highly of ourselves, they are a reason to work as hard as we can. All of the members have been positioned by God in such a way as to be one functioning whole. They do not all have the same "office."

*"praxis... a doing, a mode of acting; a deed, act, transaction... in a bad sense, i.q. wicked deed, crime... plural wicked doings(cf our practices i.e. trickery). . ." (Thayer p 534; 4234)*

Each member in the body has its own "doing," its own "mode of acting," its own "deed" or "act" to do. The arms have absolutely nothing in common regarding their actions and deeds with any other part of the body. The brain has one deed to do, the heart another and the eyes another. Every single part of the body has a unique task to do and unique and special abilities to do that task. It would be sheer folly for any part of the body to think more highly of itself than another part of the body simply because it could do things that other parts of the body could not do.

The truth taught here is that there is no two parts of any human body that performs the same task or function. Each part of the body has its own deeds, its own business, its own mode of acting. The brain does its business while the heart does it, the lungs do theirs, the eyes, ears, mouth, nose, eyelids do theirs. Each has its own duty and has been given the ability by God to perform that duty well.

*but speaking truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, (even) Christ; 16 from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in (due) measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love. Eph 4:15-16*

*according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; 11 if any man speaketh, (speaking) as it were oracles of God; if any man ministereth, (ministering) as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Pet 4:10-11*

## **5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ,**

With a third term of comparison, we again are forced to take the illustration above and compare it to the reality here.

*"houto... in this manner, thus, so; 1. by virtue of its native demonstrative force it refers to what preceded; in the manner spoken of; in the way described; in the way it was once; in this manner; in such a manner; thus so..." (Thayer, p. 468-469; 3779)*

In "the same manner spoken of above," and in exactly the same way that they human body functions so do we in Christ. In 1 Cor 12:12-27 Paul explains this more fully. In one Spirit we were all baptized into the one body. Each one of us is exactly like a member in the human body. Uniquely qualified to do only what we can do. Like an eye, nose or heart has its own unique abilities so do each of us.

*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. 13 For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18 But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now they are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary: 23 and those (parts) of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely (parts) have more abundant comeliness; 24 whereas our comely (parts) have no need: but God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to that (part) which lacked; 25 that there should be no schism in the body; but (that) the members*

*should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or (one) member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof. 1 Cor 12:12-27*

In one Spirit we were all baptized into the one body. Each of us is exactly like a part of the human body. Each of us has specific abilities and gifts that God has given to us. As we give our bodies as a living sacrifice our faith is measured out by what he have the ability and opportunity to do. In the talents God gives to each according to his ability, and in the matter of the needy saints it was according to what one has.

*And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey. Mt 25:15*

*For if the readiness is there, (it is) acceptable according as (a man) hath, not according as (he) hath not. 2 Cor 8:12*

### **and severally members one of another.**

The term “severally” emphasizes a mutual relationship where each side recognizes the worth and importance of the efforts of the other. It is the preposition “*kata*” which often brings to mind a set of scales where both sides are equal. In this case, the individual abilities of each Christian are placed side by side and always come out to be of equal proportion and measure.

Just as there is no way in a human body to separate the parts and determine value so also in the body of Christ. All are proportionally members one of another counting on individual efforts of one another. In the human body each organ and member relies on all the others to keep the body functioning properly and comfortably. Christ’s body is exactly the same.

Everyone has gifts both from birth and by grace. Regardless of the depth or importance of these abilities, entrance into the body equalizes them into something that is to be used to benefit the whole. Jesus as the head suffered and died to bring redemption. He brought the greatest abilities and gifts. The rest of must see our own gifts as a small supplement to his great one. He created the body and now calls upon each of us to join him and to use our own gifts with humility and submission and with great joy that we have something of our own to offer. We are all simply members of one great spiritual body. When needs arise each part does its share.

*from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in (due) measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love. Eph 4:16*

There can be no arrogance, no thinking more highly than we ought to think when we see things in this perspective. We are all placed in the body by God to work and serve for the great purposes God has designed the body of Christ to perform. When an opportunity arises to do our share because of some gift God has given, we do our part with joy that we also have something to bring. With this arrangement, there is no better or worse, no more and less important. Every member in a local church is to be seen as having great value and importance to Christ.

The reason for this is exactly the same for the body of Christ and the human body. Just as there is no way in a human body to separate the parts and determine value so also is it true with the manner in which God has created the church. We are all proportionally members one of another for just as the human body counts on the individual efforts of each organ and member to keep the body functioning properly and comfortably, so also doe Jesus count on us! The reciprocal pronoun stresses even more the mutual need of each member for the abilities of the others.

*“allelon... one another; reciprocally, mutually...” (Thayer, p. 28; 240)*

The term reciprocal refers again to a center point where the efforts of all are needed to make thing work properly. The crankshaft in a car is designed to use the reciprocity of the firing pistons to continually push it around and around. Each point on the shaft has a weak point where one firing piston needs the help of another to bring it back to a position where its own power can again be utilized. On a more simple level, reciprocity is seen in a see saw where each side much push off the ground with their own legs to keep the motion going.

There can be no arrogance, not thinking more highly than we ought to think when we see things in this perspective. We are all placed in the body by God to work and serve for the great purposes God has designed the body of Christ to perform. When an opportunity arises to do our share because of some gift God has given, we do our part with joy that we also have something to bring. With this arrangement, there is no better or worse, no more and less important. Every member in a local church is to be seen as having great value and importance to Christ.

*Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary: 23 and those (parts) of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely (parts) have more abundant comeliness; 24 whereas our comely (parts) have no need: but God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to that (part) which lacked; 25 that there should be no schism in the body; but (that) the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or (one) member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof. 1 Cor 12:22-27*

The entire context then is designed to lead man from the pride of life that each feels in their own God given abilities to a humility and lowliness of mind that compels us to see our gifts not as a reason for pride, but for service.

*according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; 1 Pet 4:10*

## **6 And having gifts differing**

Whenever a verse begins with an “and,” it is wise to see to what it is joined. Bible classes cannot always finish at the end of a section. So it is necessary to see this thought in its context.

*For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another. 6 And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us... Rom 12:4-5*

Our body is “*fearfully and marvellously made!*” Every one of our senses, all that keeps it alive and gives us the skills to take dominion and subdue are based on multitudes of systems and parts. Respiratory, circulatory, central nervous system, and digestive systems work in conjunction with bones, tissues to make up our body. Every one of them does amazing but different things. None is more special or more important than another when there is a task to be done that needs them. Just like we have that in our body, so we are in Christ’s body. Just as the unique abilities of each part differ but complement, so must we in Christ’s body. This is the sober thinking of the living transformed sacrifice.

Every Christian has gifts that differ from every other Christian. Each has something unique to bring and it is through that uniqueness that our own measure of faith is determined. Remember. “*if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.*” 2 Cor 8:12

The term “having” is a present active participle emphasizing possession.

*“echo... . Transitively. 1. to have l. q. to hold; ... 2. to have . q. to own, possess; a. external things such as pertain to property, riches, furniture, utensils, goods, food, etc. ...” (Thayer, p. 265-268; 2192).*

It describes each individual as one who possesses gifts. This simple statement of fact represents the reality of each of us as we enter into the church and begin to grow as Christians. We are all possessors of “gifts.”

*“charisma... a gift of grace; a favor which one receives without any merit of his own; in the N. T. ... the gift of divine grace ... in the technical Pauline sense charismata... denotes extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the holy Spirit... ” (Thayer, p. 667; 5486)*

Though the Spirit had access to other words, he chooses the one that was used earlier in the book to describe God’s gracious acts of kindness that bestowed upon them things they neither merited nor deserved.

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

## according to the grace that was given to us,

These gifts are “of grace” and “a favor received without any merit of his own.” (Thayer, p. 667; 5486). Paul used this word earlier to describe the most precious gift God has given to us. “For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 6:23). Hence in the same manner that salvation is a free gift from God so also are all our native abilities. Looking ahead we get a clear picture of the blending of gifts of grace bestowed through the gospel(prophecy, showing mercy), those God gave at birth(teaching, exhorting, ruling), and those bestowed upon us as acts of providence while living in this world(giving). The truth is that everything we possess is either a gift bestowed at creation, a specific gift given to us at birth, one bestowed when Jesus died upon the cross, one bestowed upon our conversion, or given providentially or through after our conversion. What do we now have the we did not receive from the father of lights?

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning. James 1:17*

*For who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? but if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? 1 Cor 4:7*

How can we think highly of ourselves when we really grasp this? Every wonderful thing we have, can do or know is a gift from God which we did nothing to deserve. From any angle we might ponder our gifts this is the truth. All natural possessions such as good health, intelligence, personality, beauty, leadership, emotional makeup, craftsmanship, ability to make wealth, or any other thing we might consider as something that makes us a cut above anyone else was simply a gift offered to us at birth by the God who formed us. There just is no such thing as a self made person. We live in a borrowed body in a borrowed world with borrowed air, borrowed food, and a borrowed home. Nothing we have is truly ours. We enter naked into this world, and will leave it again naked. Where can a clear thinking person find any room for feelings of pride and onepmanship over any other person when they see things thus portrayed as they really are. We cannot afford to fashion ourselves according to the world in this respect. We must view ourselves as absolutely in the debt of our creator for all we have and all we are. We only have gifts that “differ.”

When we take this the next step and ponder all the spiritual blessings God has given us since baptism the point becomes even more powerful. All self-control, all the wisdom, all the love, joy, peace, longsuffering, all the faith, virtue, knowledge, godliness brotherly kindness; all that we have received by being the children of God, being washed in the blood of Jesus, and hearkening to the word of God which is living and active and makes us wise unto salvation and also thoroughly furnishes us unto every good work, all of this too goes back to the grace of God. No one can name even one thing that they have that they could take pride in as though it was not just another gift of grace God gave us to minister to one another. There is nothing, and those who think clearly and evaluate soberly will see that point much to their own benefit, and truly to the furthering of the kingdom of heaven.

Each gift gives us a different method of ministering to God and to one another. They differ in function and from, but not in value. God sees each gift as a variety of the same basic thing. Each gift is simply an opportunity to serve. An opportunity to be of use and value to another. It is only because of God's grace. The point is simple.

*And (lest) thou say in thy heart, My power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth. 18 But thou shalt remember Jehovah thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth; that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as at this day. Deut 8:11-18*

We only have gifts that “differ.”

*“diaphoros (diaphero) 1. different, varying in kind...” (Thayer p. 143; 1313)*

Each gift gives us a different method of ministering to God and to one another. They differ in function and from, but not in value. God sees each gift as a variety of the same basic thing. Each gift is simply an opportunity to serve. An opportunity to be of use and value to another. What follows are the following gifts that we must see as of special importance to use in the body.

1 **prophecy**, to the proportion of our faith;  
2 or **ministry**, to our ministry;  
3 he that **teacheth**, to his teaching;  
4 he that **exhorteth**, to his exhorting;

5 he that **giveth** with liberality;  
6 he that **ruleth**, with diligence;  
7 he that **showeth mercy**, with cheerfulness.

### whether prophecy,

It is important to note that this first “gift” is such an obviously gracious act on the part of God and the Holy Spirit that no Christian could lay claim to it in a way that would lead to pride or feelings of superiority. No prophecy ever came through the will of man.

*For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Pet 1:21*

From the time of Abel(Lk 11:49-51), God selected men to give his Holy Spirit so they could speak his word through inspiration. Prophecy occurs when God selects someone, gives them his Holy Spirit, and they begin to speak by inspiration. This is the very essence of Scripture.

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (NAU) 2 Tim 3:16-17*

The ability to give Scripture to these congregations was of the highest and greatest value to them. God has promised in Joel and was quoted by Peter that he would give this gift to the early church.

*And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams: Acts 2:17*

There was nothing in this gift that could lead any one who possessed it to think more highly than he ought to think. Sober thinking would lead one to the conclusion that this was a gift from God that they could use to measure out the depths of their faith in a way the congregation could see it. Both the means of giving the gift, and the specific gift given to each Christian was completely beyond the control of man and resided in the Spirit himself. It was only through the laying on of the apostles hands that the Holy Spirit was given.

*Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: 15 who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: 16 for as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. 18 Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, 19 saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:14-19*

While speaking to the brethren in Corinth on the same topic as here, Paul makes it very clear that though there were different gifts, ministrations and workings, the same Spirit, Lord, and God was behind them all and those who possessed them were all doing the work of God.

*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: 9 to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit; 10 and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discernings of spirits; to another (divers) kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues: 1 Cor 12:4-10*

After listing all these gifts, the Spirit wanted it clearly understood that he was responsible for the gift that each Christian was given. Those who were given the gift of prophecy had no claim at all. The Holy Spirit chose them and gave it to them.

*but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will. 1 Cor 12:4-11*

The prophets were often listed with the apostles and held an office of great importance. Before the word of Christ was fully revealed, the church depended upon her apostles and prophets to reveal God's desires to them. Even today, it is the apostles and prophets who wrote the books of the New Testament. We owe them a great debt for all Scripture that has been given through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit has come through them.

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, (divers) kinds of tongues. 1 Cor 12:28

So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; Eph 2:19-20

which in other generation was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; Eph 3:5

And he gave some (to be) apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: Eph 4:11-12

Prophecy was a great gift offered to his people by God. It was a great tool for the edification(building up) of the church. Those who possessed this gift were a wonderful asset to the growth and development of the body. Yet who would dare to consider such a gift as something of their own power, ability, or intellect? It was a gift to share and to use for good. Not one to brag upon.

### **(let us prophesy) according to the proportion of our faith;**

Once again getting out the balancing scales(*kata*), those who are have the gift of prophecy are asked to place the gift which was bestowed by the Spirit upon them because he knew that individual could use it to profit the church on one side of the balance. On the other side of the balance is the "proportion of our faith."

The term proportion is only used here in the New Testament.

*"analogia* Eng., analogy, signified in classical Greek "the right relation, the coincidence or agreement existing or demanded according to the standard of the several relations, not agreement as equality" (Cremer). Vine's Vol 3 p. 225; 356)

*"analogia ... (analogos conformable, proportional), proportion..." (Thayer p. 39; 356)*

Each Christian with the gift of prophecy is asked to look at the potential of the gift's value to the church, place it on one side of the scales of balance, then exercise that gift in conformity and proportion to his faith. He has been given a gift that has value and the only limit is his own faith.

Though some have questioned whether this is subjective or objective faith, the entire context of the book and especially of this section must decide the issue. Does the prophet's own faith have anything to do with their ability to prophecy? Ask Moses and Jonah! Both of them were chosen by God to be his prophets and neither of them at the beginning had the faith to exercise it. Moses because he did not feel he had the ability(Ex 4:10-16) and Jonah because he did not want Nineveh to be saved(Jonah 1:1-3; 4;1-3).

The point here is so important not only to those who can prophecy, but to every Christian with every type of gift. Each must trust in the Lord with all their heart and not lean on their own understanding(Pr 3;5-7), each must use what God has given to them and use it to honor and glorify God. God's gifts are constant. It is our zeal, our faith and our obedience that make the difference! When God spoke to Joshua, he warned him over and over that it was his use of God's gifts and power that would lead to success.

*There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. 6 Be strong and of good courage; for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land which I swear unto their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest have good success whithersoever thou goest. 8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. 9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed: for Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. Josh 1:5-9*

This is exactly what Paul is affirming here. Each of us has gifts that differ according to God's gracious dealings. Each will become a blessing to others and receive praise from God when their

own faith and courage motivates them to use the gifts they have to their greatest potential. The parables of the talents, pounds, and ten virgins teach exactly the same thing. God wants all men to be saved, God so loved the world he sent his only begotten son, God has taken the initiative and done everything that can be done. The rest is up to us. Regardless of our gift let us use it to the fullest potential that our faith and trust in God will allow us to use it.

## **7 or ministry,**

The Spirit moves from the single gift of prophecy to general categories which hold many different gifts. The term “ministry” describes every gift God has given that helps Christians to serve in evangelism, edification and benevolence.

*“diakonia... service, ministering, esp. of those who execute the commands of others. 1. univ. ... 2. of those who by the command of God proclaim and promote religion among men; a. of the office of Moses... b. of the office of the apostles and its administration... c. of the ministrations or service of all who, endowed by God with powers of mind and heart peculiarly adapted to this end, endeavor zealously and laboriously to promote the cause of Christ among men, as apostles, prophets, evangelists, elders, etc. ... 3. the ministrations of those who render to others the offices of Christian affection... 4. the office of deacon in the primitive church... 5 the service of those who prepare and present food...” (Thayer, p. 137-138; 1248)*

As one carefully reviews this term, it’s scope gets larger and larger. The term is used to describe the service which the apostles gave to God, the service of those who “*endowed by God with powers of mind and heart peculiarly adapted to this end, endeavor zealously and laboriously to promote the cause of Christ among men.*” This was what deacons did, it is what Dorcas did for the widows (Acts 9:36) as well as what the church at Jerusalem was doing for it’s widows (Acts 6). Every act of service that a Christian has the ability to do is to be viewed as an opportunity for him to put it on the scales and be certain that he is doing it up to the proportion of his faith.

*only, whereunto we have attained, by that same (rule) let us walk. Phil 3:16*

*To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. James 4:17*

It doesn’t matter whether we are better fitted toward evangelism, edification, or benevolence, only that we use our gifts to the best of our ability.

## **(let us give ourselves) to our ministry;**

In this case the proportion is based upon the preposition “in.”

*“en...a preposition taking the dative after it;... Eng. in, on, at, with, by among. I LOCALLY; 1. of Place proper; a. in the interior of some whole; within the limits of some space... 5. used of that with which a person is surrounded, equipped, furnished, assisted, or acts... c. of that which one either leads or brings with him, or with which he is furnished or equipped; esp after verbs of coming, (en of accompaniment), where we often say with ... d. of the instrument or means by or with which anything is accomplished, owing to the influence of the Hebr. prep... much more common in the sacred writ. than in the prof... where we say with, by means of, by(through)...” (Thayer, p. 209-212; 1722)*

Those who have been given the gift to minister must operate “en” that realm. It is within the interior of that gift that he is to function. Since God has “surrounded, equipped, furnished and assisted” him in that area, it is that area that he is to place upon the scale and assess whether his faith is actually reaches its full potential and proportion. So the person who has been given the gift to serve is to operate in the realm of service to the fullest proportion of his/her faith. Each of the final realms listed by the Spirit here in Romans uses this same formula.

*7or ministry, in(en) the ministry; or the one teaching in(en) the teaching; 8 the one exhorting in(en) exhorting: the one giving in(en) liberality; the one ruling in(en) diligence; the one showing mercy, in(en) cheerfulness.*

God bids us assess the talents and gifts he has given to each of us. The realms we can operate and serve him best. When we have found them, we must operate in them.

*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do (it) with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, whither thou goest. Eccl 9:10*

## **or he that teacheth, to his teaching;**

Others have gifts in the realm of teaching. They know the truth, have the ability to teach the truth,

and are given opportunities to do so.

*“didasko... 1. absol. a. to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them, deliver didactic discourses:... b. to be a teacher ... c. to discharge the office of teacher, conduct one’s self as a teacher... 2... to impart instruction, instil doctrine into one... to explain, expound, a thing...” (Thayer, p. 144; 1321)*

Those who are apt to teach, who have the ability and the opportunity to impart the knowledge of God to another person, have been given a precious gift that they ought to share with as many as possible. Again they are work within that realm to the greatest proportion possible.

*For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. Heb 5:12*

*but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: (being) ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear: 1 Pet 3:15*

## **8 or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting:**

The Spirit now adds exhortation to the list of things that God’s gifts to each individual can be used to benefit the church to the proportion of their own faith. The first term is a verb while the second is a noun:

*“parakaleo... I. to call to ones side, call for, summon:... II. to address, speak to;... which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc. hence result a variety of senses... 1. to admonish, exhort;... 2. to beg, entreat, beseech; ...3. to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort;...4. to encourage, strengthen;...5. it combines the ideas of exhorting and comforting and encouraging;... 6. to instruct, teach...” (Thayer, p. 482-483; 3870)*

*“paraklesis... (parakaleo, q.v.)... 1. prop. a calling near, summons,... 2. imploration, supplication, entreaty... 3. exhortation, admonition, encouragement... 4. consolation, comfort solace... 5. univ. persuasive discourse, stirring address, --instructive, admonitory, consolatory; powerful hortatory discourse...” (Thayer, p. 483; 3874)*

This is a wonderful realm of service that God’s children can offer to one another. Because of our mutual love, concern for each other and the general nature of our trials and temptations, we all have the ability to encourage, comfort, exhort, and strengthen one another.

Each of us has been given gifts by God to help us fulfill this great need. In all our dealings with our fellow man as each of us deals with the consequences of our sin-cursed soul and world, there is a need for this quality. God offers it to his people, they in turn offer it to the lost, and to those who are saved. Ponder carefully the variety of uses this term is used to describe in the New Testament.

*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be **comforted**. Matt 5:4*

*And with many other words he testified, and **exhorted** them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. Acts 2:40*

*who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he **exhorted** them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord: Acts 11:23*

*And they went out of the prison, and entered into (the house) of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they **comforted** them, and departed. Acts 16:40*

*And when he had gone through those parts, and had given them much **exhortation**, he came into Greece. Acts 20:2*

*being defamed, we **entreat**: we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now. 1 Cor 4:13*

*Blessed (be) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all **comfort**; 4 who **comforteth** us in all our affliction, that we may be able to **comfort** them that are in any affliction, through the **comfort** wherewith we ourselves are **comforted** of God. 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our **comfort** also aboundeth through Christ. 6 But whether we are afflicted, it is for your **comfort** and salvation; or whether we are **comforted**, it is for your **comfort**, which worketh in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: 7 and our hope for you is stedfast; knowing that, as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so also are ye of the **comfort**. 2 Cor 1:3-7*

*Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was (inflicted) by the many; 7 so that contrariwise ye should rather forgive him and **comfort** him, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow. 2 Cor 2:6-7*

Wherefore **exhort** one another, and build each other up, even as also ye do. 1Thes 5:11

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal **comfort** and good hope through grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. II Th 2:16-17

Till I come, give heed to reading, to **exhortation**, to teaching. 1 Tim 4:13

Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: 13 but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: Heb 3:12-13

and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but **exhorting** (one another); and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh. Heb 10:24-25

But I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of **exhortation**, for I have written unto you in few words. Heb 13:22

The gospel offers comfort, consolation, encouragement, and motivation to all men. As we go into the world to preach the gospel, as we assemble each first day of the week to provoke one another to love and good works, as we give ourselves to hospitality, we must be searching for ways to use pass on the gospel's comfort and encouragement to all men. To move people to action through our words and help motivate them to do what is right. Those who have this ability have a great role in the body. Barnabas was so good at it they gave him that name as a nickname.

And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race, Acts 4:36

### **he that giveth, (let him do it) with liberality;**

The term "giving" has a preposition to intensify it that adds a slight emphasis to the quality of giving. It is a giving that emphasizes fellowship, participation and association.

"meta... a preposition, akin to mesos... and hence prop. *in the midst of, amid*, denoting association, union, accompaniment;... III In COMPOSITION, *meta* denotes 1. association, fellowship, participation, *with:...*" (Thayer, 402-404; 3326)

*metadidomi*, "to give a share of, impart" (*meta*, "with"), as distinct from "giving." The apostle Paul speaks of "sharing" some spiritual gift with Christians at Rome, Rom. 1:11, "that I may impart," and exhorts those who minister in things temporal, to do so as "sharing," and that generously, 12:8, "he that giveth"; so in Eph. 4:28; Luke 3:11; in 1 Th. 2:8 he speaks of himself and his fellow missionaries as having been well pleased to impart to the converts both God's gospel and their own souls (i. e., so "sharing" those with them as to spend themselves and spend out their lives for them). (Vine's, Vol 2 p. 149; 3330)

The basic idea behind this term indicates a desire to give or share something with another with a desire to be a blessing and enhance the whole. The one like the one above takes in an immense area of duty and obligation. Christians have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. They are wealthy in many ways. Opportunities arise daily to give and share things. Sometimes it will be financial, but most of the time it will be the sharing of time, knowledge, insight, wisdom, guidance. It is giving in order to help, to bless and to benefit at whatever cost to ourselves.

*But as ye abound in everything, (in) faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and (in) all earnestness, and (in) your love to us, (see) that ye abound in this grace also. 8 I speak not by way of commandment, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity also of your love. 9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich. 2 Cor 8:7-9*

Paul did this by suffering the loss of all things to become a Christian(Phil 3), and then sacrificing liberty, comfort, freedom and life to give to others(I Cor 4:9-13). All the gifts God has given to us were meant to be shared. They are designed to benefit others and when we learn this and use them in this way, we will greatly enhance our own usefulness to the Lord.

In all our opportunities to use our gifts in order to share with others and bless them, God wants it to be done in "liberality." This is an interesting term with a variety of meanings that blend into an important concept for Christians to grasp in all their acts of giving.

"haplotes... singleness, simplicity, sincerity, mental honesty;" the virtue of one who is free from pretense and dissimulation..." (Thayer, p. 57; 572)

*haplotes* denotes (a) "simplicity, sincerity, unaffectedness" (from *haplous*, "single, simple," in contrast to *diplous*,

“double”), Rom. 12:8, “simplicity”; 2 Cor. 11:3 (in some mss. in 1:12); Eph. 6:5 and Col. 3:22, “singleness”; (b) “simplicity as manifested in generous giving,” “liberality,” 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11 (KJV, “bountifulness,” RV marg., “singleness”); 9:13 (KJV, “liberal”). (Vine’s Vol 2 p. 333; 572)

Every opportunity we are given to give must be done in the sphere and realm of “simplicity.” There must be a “singleness of purpose” and a freedom “from pretense and dissimulation.” Giving must be done to help. It must be done to glorify and obey God, it must be done to bless and reveal love. This is giving in simplicity and singleness of purpose. When our hearts move from simplicity and singleness of purpose to duplicity and other goals, we are destroying the value of the giving.

Jesus warns against double motives in giving alms.

*Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. 2 When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. 3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee. Mt 6:1-4*

All opportunities to do charitable deeds for others must be done in secret, with the honorable motives listed above. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) are terrible examples of what can happen when there is more than one motive. In finances as well as the sharing of all other things, we must keep ourselves from covetousness and a desire to be rewarded with other things than those only God can give us in the end. This is how Paul shared all that he had with those in Ephesus, and what he warns all who are rich to do.

*I coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:33-35*

*Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19 laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is (life) indeed. 1 Tim 6:17-19*

### **he that ruleth, with diligence;**

Another realm where the gifts of God can prepare them to work as members of the body is that of “ruling.”

*“proistemi... 1. in the trans. tenses to set or place before; to set over. 2. ... a. to be over to superintend, preside over... b. to be a protector or guardian; to give aid... c. to care for, give attention to...” (Thayer, p 539; 4291)*

*“proistemi... ... means “to put oneself at the head,” “to go first,” ... “to preside.” ...But other metaphorical meanings are more important: a. The most important of all is “to preside” in the sense “to lead, conduct, direct, govern”... There is also the thought of standing or going before someone or something in protection...” (Kittel, Vol VI p 700-703)*

There are many places in the church where the need to be over, protect, guard and preside arise. Mothers and fathers must do this with their children, elders with the church, teachers with their classes. Whenever an opportunity arises to do this, all the gifts God has given us to do it well must be directed toward taking this responsibility very seriously and always operating in “diligence.”

*“spoude...1. haste... 2. earnestness, diligence: univ. earnestness in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything... to give all diligence, interest one’s self most earnestly...” (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 585; 4710)*

*“spoudazo, spoude, spoudaios,... spoude “haste,” “zeal,” ... 1. Spoudazo... “to be zealous, active, concerned about something.” ... to push on with something quickly, assiduously, zealously,”... spoudaios... is used of people in the sense of “speedy,” “diligent,” ... spoude ... it means “haste” with which something must be done... “zealously, expeditiously,” ... “earnestly,”... express the “zeal” or “dedication” with which something is done...” (Kittel Vol 7 p. 559-561)*

Ruling must be taken seriously. The souls of children are at stake for parents, the souls of the congregation for elders and of the class for teachers. When God places one in the position of leading others, everything must be done to be zealous, active and concerned. There must be an earnestness in accomplishing, promoting and striving to lead.

one that ruleth well his own house, having (his) children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (but if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 1 Tim 3:4-5

But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. 1Thes 5:12-13

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit (to them): for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this (were) unprofitable for you. Heb 13:17

Be not many (of you) teachers, my brethren, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment. James 3:1

### **he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.**

The final realm of great and lasting good that Christians have been given gifts to operate within are the opportunities to “show mercy.”

“*eleeo... (eleos)...* Sept. most freq. for ... to be gracious, also for ... to have mercy; several times for... to spare and ... to console; *to have mercy on... to succor one afflicted or seeking aid...* absol. *to succor the afflicted, to bring help to the wretched* [A. V. *to show mercy*], ... pass. *to experience* [A. V. *obtain*] *mercy...* Syn. *eleeo, oikteiro: el.* to feel sympathy with the misery of another, esp. such sympathy as manifests itself in act, less freq. in word; whereas *oikt.* denotes the inward feeling of compassion which abides in the heart...” (Thayer, p. 203; 1653)

Life in the church, dealing with the weaknesses, imperfections and difficulties of others will offer multitudes of opportunities to show mercy. When others are struggling and having problems, even when those problems create sorrow for us, we are asked by God to show to them exactly what he has shown to us. Our own mercy from the Lord depends upon it.

*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.* Mt 5:7

*For judgment (is) without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment.* James 2:13

It is this compassion and mercy that keeps congregations united and working well in spite of the friction created by the sins and weaknesses of those who stumble. In the home, on the job, in evangelism, edification and benevolence, there will always be a need for mercy.

*And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; 23 and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.* Jude 1:22-23

When such times arise, our mercy must operate in the interior of “cheerfulness.”

“*hilaros, hilarotes* 1. In both classical and later Greek(also pap.) *hilaros* means “glad,” “merry,” “cheerful.” ... In later usage, *hilaros* is influenced by *hileos* and can have the sense of “benevolent.” ... in the OT the “kindly eye” is ... a term for outgoing benevolence. Hence the combination of the two sense of *hilaros* rests on the insight that a cheerful countenance reflects a kind heart.... 3. At 2 Cor 9:7... Rom 12:8... both passages the freedom and authenticity of generous giving are marked by the symptom of cheerfulness...” (Kittel vol 3 p. 297-299)

This word from which we get *hilarious* and *hilarity* has a deeper significance than simply joy or cheer. When it is time to show mercy, one can grumble, complain and be bitter about it, or they can be cheerful, generous and kind. God does not want mercy to be meted out with anything less than a heart of joyful pleasure. Every Christian ought to be pleased to show mercy to another who needs it.

Although Paul is clearly moving on to another topic, it is equally clear that he is building on the foundation of the two key truths he laid in 12:1-5. First, 12:1-2 Paul revealed we are to *present our bodies* to God as *living sacrifices* and *be not fashioned to this world but be transformed by the renewing* of our mind. Clearly in the first column below Paul is giving us the *good, acceptable and perfect will of God* information needed to *renew our mind*. Second, Paul compared our relationship in the church to that of the human body. We are all baptized into the one body(1Cor 12:12-13) and are now *individually members one of another*. As we look at the rest of the material in chapter 12, they can clearly be placed upon one or the other of these foundation truths.

**Present Body as Living Sacrifice**  
**Not Fashioned but Transformed 12:1-2**

- 9 ***Abhor that which is evil;  
cleave to that which is good.***
- 11 ***in diligence not slothful;  
fervent in spirit;  
serving the Lord;***
- 12 ***rejoicing in hope;  
patient in tribulation;  
continuing steadfastly in prayer;***
- 14 ***Bless them that persecute you;  
bless, and curse not.***
- 16 ***Set not your mind on high things,  
condescend to things that are lowly.  
Be not wise in your own conceits.***
- 17 ***Render to no man evil for evil.  
Think of things honorable in sight of all  
men.***
- 18 ***If possible as much as in you - peace with  
all***
- 19 ***Avenge not yourselves,  
but give place unto the wrath (of God):***
- 20 ***if thine enemy hunger, feed him;  
if he thirst, give him to drink:  
so doing shalt heap coals of fire on his  
head.***
- 21 ***Be not overcome of evil,  
but overcome evil with good.***

**One Body in Christ,**  
**Individually Members One of**  
**Another.12:3-5**

- 9 ***Let love be without hypocrisy.***
- 10 ***In love of the brethren  
be tenderly affectioned one to another  
in honor preferring one another;***
- 13 ***communicating to the necessities of the  
saints  
given to hospitality.***
- 15 ***Rejoice with them that rejoice;  
weep with them that weep.***
- 16 ***Be of the same mind one toward another.***

**9 Let love**

Unlike other Scriptures where explanations and examples are given, Paul states simply “*love unpretentiously.*” Other Scriptures reveal the power and depth of this *agape* - love. From God it brought Jesus(Jn 3:16) From Jesus it laid down his life(Jn 15:12-15), and from us it marks us as disciples(Jn 3:16).

“*agape*,... a purely bibl. and eccl. word... in signification it follows the verb *agapao*; consequently it denotes 1. *affection, good-will, love, benevolence:...*” (Thayer, p. 4-5; 26)

“*agapao*.. with acc. of the person, *to have a preference for, wish well to, regard the welfare of ... with an acc. of the thing, agapao denotes to take pleasure in the thing, prize it above other things, be unwilling to abandon it or do without it... to welcome with desire, long for:...*” (Thayer, p. 3-4; 25)

*agape* love is divine love. It differs from human love in one distinctive manner. Divine love(*agape*) always and only seeks the well-being and benefit of another. Human love cannot always be divorced from selfishness. We may based upon human love seek our own over another. If my own pleasure and happiness will be compromised by doing something necessary for another’s well being, we will be tempted not to do it. A parent may love(on a human level) his child too much to discipline him. But his divine love(*agape*) forces him to act(Pr 13:24). We may also on a human level seek to avoid conflict with those we love(or even like) by refusing to rebuke or teach them the

Scriptures. While divine (*agape*) love forces us to act in their eternal interests even if it destroys our own friendship. So also our *agape* to God. It forces us to set aside what we want and our own pleasure to put God's interests above our own. All the commands and ordinances, all the expectations of God and all our honor and submission to God and to our fellow man are summed up in this *agape love*.

*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? 37 And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second like (unto it) is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. 40 On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets. Mt 22:36-40*

Paul passes over all the details, he simply has one thought in mind. Be certain that the love you show has no pretension.

### **be without hypocrisy.**

Actors and plays were just as much a part of the Greek culture as they are in our own. People who can move others by pretending to be something they are not. On the stage, such an ability is respected and honored and this is the meaning of the term "hypocrisy."

*"anupokritos... from a, negative, n, euphonic, and an adjectival form corresponding to A, signifies unfeigned; ... "without dissimulation," ... "without hypocrisy;" ..."* (Vine Vol 1 p 324)

*"hupokrites... 1. an answering; an answer;... 2. the acting of a stage-player... 3. dissimulation, hypocrisy..."* (Thayer, p. 643; 5272)

When one acts in real life, it is not respected. When anyone pretends to be or to feel something that is not real it is viewed with great dislike and dishonor. Therefore our love must not come of dissimulation or hypocrisy, but from a genuine and sincere heart. This does not mean that from time to time we have to force ourselves to do something that runs counter to our natural inclinations because we know God would want us to do it. Jesus was not acting as a hypocrite in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was struggling with his own desires and placing God's above them. It is always a sign of maturity and spiritual growth when we understand the next level of love that God expects of us and we struggle to master it. This is not hypocrisy. Hypocrisy and feigning is what we do when we have no interest at all in doing or feeling something, but we know it is expected by others and in order to fit in we act as though we are acting in love when in fact we are only acting to receive the praise of men. Living sacrifices who are transformed must work to actually comply with God's demands and expectations, not just settle for shallow actions.

### **Abhor that which is evil;**

Peter made a very important observation about our upbringing.

*knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; 1 Pet 1:18*

Many were raised in an environment where at least some of the things Isaiah discussed in his own day were being practiced.

*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Isa 5:20*

There is a need on the part of each of us to evaluate the things God says are good and God says are evil and then assess our own attitudes toward the things God reveals as evil. God reveals that we must "abhor" what he calls evil.

*"apostugo... to dislike, abhor, have a horror of..."* (Thayer p. 68; 655)

*"apostugo... (apo & stugeo) to hate) to shrink from with abhorrence, detest)* (Harper's p. 47; 655)

We must go deeper than simply acknowledging that the things God reveals to be evil are evil. We must learn to abhor, look upon with disgust, dislike, and hatred. We need to have a visceral response to things that are "evil."

*"poneros... 2. bad, of a bad nature or condition; a. in a physical sense... b. in an ethical sense, evil, wicked, bad, etc..."* (Thayer, 4190)

Those in this world have no problem with the evil others practice

*who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practice them. Rom 1:32*

It is amazing how each person is raised to see some things as evil and others that God reveals as evil they practice and consent with others who practice. The process is very well described in the quote below:

*Vice is a monster of so frightful mien, As to be hated needs but to be seen; Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face, We first endure, then pity, then embrace. ~Alexander Pope*

For most of us before we are introduced to sin, our conscience agrees with God about the nature of most evil things. Those who have never stolen and have been taught it is wrong to steal will abhor it. Those who believe murder is wrong abhor it. The problem arises when our own hearts succumb to a temptation or witnesses another and slowly the conscience is weakened and deadened until it quits speaking on that subject.

After we become a Christian we must search the Scriptures and find all those things God calls evil. If God's word reveals that something we love or consent to is evil, we must train our hearts to abhor it. Truly the fear of Jehovah is to hate evil.

*The fear of Jehovah is to hate evil: Pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, And the perverse mouth, do I hate. Prov 8:13*

### **cleave to that which is good.**

Just as all the things God reveals as evil we are now to abhor, all the things God says are good we are to "cleave" ourselves to them

*"kollao... prop. to glue, to glue together, to cement, to fasten together; hence univ. to join or fasten firmly together; in the NT only the passive is found with reflexive force is found, to join oneself to, to cleave to..." (Thayer, p. 353; 2853)*

Here again, some things will be easy. Multitudes of things that God reveals are good are already an active part of our life. We have cleaved and joined ourselves to them and we refuse to give them up. But there are other things God sees as good that we have never done and are not yet be a part of our character. We might not even enjoy them when we first hear about them or do them. But God expects us to learn to like them, to join ourselves to them, and finally to cement and fasten ourselves so firmly to them that we will not be moved away from them. Many find the God's selection of how to worship him a bit unusual the first time they hear and practice them. The songs are different the sermons and prayers hard to listen to, and cheerful giving hard to master, but in time we learn to love and glue ourselves to them.

### **10 In love of the brethren**

It takes this entire phrase to translate the single Greek word Paul used.

*"philadelphia... the love of brothers (or sisters), brotherly love... In the N. T. the love which Christians cherish for each other as "brethren"..." (Thayer, p. 653; 5360)*

This also ties back to the previous passages. Just as we are fellow members in the body of Jesus Christ, we are also brothers and sisters in Christ. We are the house of God, God is our Father, and we are all brethren. Paul speaks of the adoption process in Galatians.

*but when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 6 And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. 7 So that thou art no longer a bondservant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. Gal 4:4-7*

This is simply the extension what Paul revealed earlier in the book. Just as the Jews were a nation and a family, so are Christians today who have been adopted into that family.

*For this cause (it is) of faith, that (it may be) according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all 17 (as it is written, A father of many nations have I made thee) before him whom he believed, (even) God, who*

*giveth life to the dead, and calleth the things that are not, as though they were. Rom 4:16-17*

As children of Abraham and of God, feelings of natural affection need to be developed between all brethren. So first we gain an intellectual understanding of our relationship to one another. Then, as we grow to see one another as part of this great family and great nation of God's elect, we slowly and naturally fulfill the command to love one another as brethren. This is an often given command in the epistles.

*But concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another; 10 for indeed ye do it toward all the brethren that are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more; 1Thes 4:9-10*

*Let love of the brethren continue. Heb 13:1*

*Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: 1 Pet 1:22*

*and in (your) godliness brotherly kindness; and in (your) brotherly kindness love. 2 Pet 1:7*

Christ's death upon the cross and our purchased redemption through our rebirth in baptism created this special relationship between all who have been born again into the family of God. We are here bidden to enhance this with our own efforts. We must learn to love the fellow members of Christ's body as our brothers and sisters.

### **be tenderly affectioned one to another;**

Because we are brethren, God expects us to develop "tender affection" toward one another in the church.

*philostorgos... (philos and storge) the mutual love of parents and children; also of husbands and wives), loving affection, prone to love, loving tenderly; used chiefly of the reciprocal tenderness of parents and children..." (Thayer p. 655; 5387)*

In the previous verse he combined *philos* with *adelphos*, here he combine *philos* (love of affection, desire and enjoyment) and *storge* (natural affection and love those in our family). From these two words it is clear the Spirit seeks to establish the basis for a strong tie of affection, closeness and tenderness. As noted in the definition this is how mother's and father's take to their children as well as how brothers and sisters and husbands and wives grow in their mutual concern, care, devotion and tenderness toward each other. It is the glue and bond of the family unit, based upon the strongest emotions of man. This is the very opposite of those who are "without natural affection" the Spirit described in Romans 1:31. They are "*a-storge*." (*a- alpha privative* negates the verb *storge*) Here the *philos* strengthens the term *storge*. The Spirit is asking us to enhance our own natural affection we feel toward our fleshly families and direct it "to" one another.

*"eis,... it denotes the end; and... b. the end which a thing is adapted to attain... c. the end which one has in view, i.e. object, purpose;... d. the end by which a thing is completed, i.e. the result or effect... (Thayer, p. 183-186; 1519).*

With this preposition the goal and direction of this love is set forth. It is for "one another."

*"allelon... one another; reciprocally, mutually..." (Thayer, p. 28; 240)*

We direct it toward every member of the body. Through reciprocity it continues to grow. This term was used in verse five to emphasize the mutual efforts and benefits our gifts can bring to the body. Here it describes how our affection is to be given back and forth and thus continue to grow. Again, the nature of reciprocity is that of two forces helping each other continue to work. We see it in isometric exercises. In order for them to work, equal force (reciprocity) must push against each other, so also in the balancing scales and even a teeter-toter. This is exactly what God desired to see in the body of Christ. Brethren loving each other and through acts of kindness and generosity this love is drawn ever higher.

### **in honor preferring one another;**

The topic not yet being exhausted, the Spirit asks one more thing of us as loving brethren in regard to "honor."

*“time... (fr. to, to estimate, honor,...) (a valuing, rating)... 1. a valuing by which the price is fixed; hence the price itself: of the price paid or received for a person or thing bought or sold... 2. honor which belongs or is shown to one: the honor of one who outranks others, pre-eminence... veneration, ... deference, reverence...” (Thayer, p. 624; 5092).*

Because we are brethren, there is a mutual honor, respect and pre-eminence due to each other. We are all a part of the elect race, children of Abraham and a kingdom of priests (1Pet 2:9-10). There is honor and pre-eminence that belongs to each and every faithful member of the church. But clearly no one outside of the church will manifest or even see this as true. The world will never treat Christians with respect and honor. For them, we are the off scouring of all things. We must therefore “prefer” one another in respect to the giving of honor.

*“proegeomai... to go before and show the way, to go before and lead, to go before as leader... one going before another as an example of deference...” (Thayer, p. 539; 4285)*

Each Christian is to lead the way in this respect. Instead of waiting to be honored, we must be leading the way to honor the other. A comedy routine has two polite gentlemen standing at the door each insisting that the other go first. *“After you... no after you; I insist after you... No I insist after you...”* Though humorous, it illustrates the true attitude of the Christian. When we do this for each other the reciprocity (*allelon*) again operates and helps to create greater and greater honor for each other. In the matter of honor, as living sacrifices and transformed to the will of God, we are to become more concerned in giving each honor than we are in receiving such honor.

*(doing) nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; 4 not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Phil 2:3-4*

Jesus sought to illustrate this concept over and over in his promise that the greatest in the kingdom is the one who serves the other. We should not seek chief seats nor honor. Instead we should be giving the chief seats to others and seeking to honor them.

### **11 in diligence not slothful;**

Just as God wants those who rule to do it with “diligence” (12:8), he wants all Christians to approach their gifts and responsibilities as being very important to themselves. The term “diligence” is a word that describes how we approach our work.

*“spoude... 1. haste... 2. earnestness, diligence: univ. earnestness in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything... to give all diligence, interest one’s self most earnestly...” (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 585; 4710)*

*“spoudazo, spoude, spoudaios,... spoude “haste,” “zeal,” ... 1. spoudazo... “to be zealous, active, concerned about something.” ... to push on with something quickly, assiduously, zealously,”... spoudaios... is used of people in the sense of “speedy,” “diligent,” ... spoude ... it means “haste” with which something must be done... “zealously, expeditiously,” ... “earnestly,”... express the “zeal” or “dedication” with which something is done...” (Kittel Vol 7 p. 559-561; 4710)*

A diligent man is one who is earnest, zealous and active. Such a person is speedy in the manner in which he exercises his responsibilities. Like Naomi’s words regarding Boaz.

*Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall; for the man will not rest, until he have finished the thing this day. Ruth 3:18*

There is so much God has asked us to do. Not only in our personal growth and development, but in our love for our brethren and our zeal for the lost. God has asked those who bring their bodies as living sacrifices to approach them with diligence. He wants us to be earnest and zealous about the things he wants us to do. They require us to push on assiduously and with haste.

*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do (it) with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, whither thou goest. Eccl 9:10*

In addition to diligence Paul gives the negative or opposite side. Living sacrifices and transformed servants are never “slothful” about the manner in which approach and fulfill the obligations and duties God has requested. It is a part of the honor, respect, and reverence in which we hold him that we do his commands without sloth.

*“okneros... Like oknos which means “hesitation” through weariness, sloth, fear, bashfulness, or reserve, okneros is used of person in the sense of showing oknon, “hesitating,” “anxious,” “negligent,” “slothful.” It thus denotes one*

who for various reasons or difficulties does not have the resolution to act... In the OT *okneros* ... depicts the slothful man who lacks the resolve to get to work (Pr 6:6,9) who lets inconveniences stop him (Pr. 20:4), or who having no resolution, never moves on from the will to the deed (Pr 21:25). ..." (Kittel Vol 5; 167; 3636)

Christians must be cautious and watchful. Procrastination can creep upon them. It is a terrible thing to be a Christian and to profess faith in God but allow our own weaknesses to keep us from honoring him with a zealous obedience. We must not hesitate to do what we know we ought to be doing. We must not allow "weariness, sloth, fear, bashfulness, or reserve" to keep us from our master's business.

*He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. 5 As thou knowest not what is the way of the wind, (nor) how the bones (do grow) in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the work of God who doeth all. 6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good. Eccl 11:4-6*

God desires to see his people working in such a way that it is obvious that they consider what they are doing to be important and that haste and energy are needed to gain it. We need to manifest the attitude of the ten and five talent man, and never of the man who only received one.

*For (it is) as (when) a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey. 16 Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. 17 In like manner he also that (received) the two gained other two. 18 But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. 19 Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them. 20 And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. 21 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22 And he also that (received) the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 24 And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter; 25 and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own. 26 But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter; 27 thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. 28 Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents. 29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. 30 And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Mt 25:14-30*

### **fervent in spirit;**

Along the same lines, God wants us to be "fervent" in spirit.

*zeo to boil with heat, be hot* often in Greek writing; thus of water used of water metaph. used of boiling anger, love, zeal, for what is good or bad etc. ... (Thayer p. 271; 2204)

There needs to be an intensity of attitude that makes us "boil with heat" when an opportunity to serve the Lord arises. It is what the Levites did when Moses asked who was on the Lord's side (Ex 32:25-27). It is what Phinehas did (Num 25:7-13) when an Israelite blatantly sinned in his sight. There is a need for intensity and sincerity in each living sacrifice for the Lord. Whenever we read "*spirit*" in the NT we have some ambiguity. It can mean our own spirit or our attitude toward things. It may be either here. God could be telling us we need to have a fervent attitude or he could be asking us to awaken our spirit within and make it zealous and on fire. After Paul's discussion of the flesh and spirit in chapters 7-8 it would perfectly fit that we need to give our spirit the fervency it needs to win this battle. It is our spirit that responds to the Holy Spirit. It is our spirit that desires to do the will of God and wishes to resist the flesh. We must be more fervent in our own spirit to do good as our flesh is to do evil. This comes when the promises of God mean more to us than the fulfillment of our fleshly desires.

*By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward. Heb 11:24-26*

## servicing the Lord;

This is what living sacrifices do! In this verse Paul chooses a present active participle (Han p. 311). A participle is an action that is turned into a person. The one who is so given to service that he becomes “the serving one.”

*“doleuo... 1. prop. to be a slave, serve, do service... 2. metaph. to obey, submit to; a. in a good sense: absol. to yield obedience... to obey one’s commands and render to him the services due... b. in a bad sense, of those who become slaves to some base power, to yield to, give one’s self up to...” (Thayer, p. 157; 1398)*

This is the true application of our confession. When we confess Jesus as Lord, we are committing ourselves to “yield obedience” “obey his commands,” and render the services due. As transformed and living sacrifices this is the true goal we are striving toward. We were bought with a price and are no longer our own (1 Cor 6:19-20). Whatever we do or word or deed must now be done only by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ (Col 3:18).

## 12 rejoicing in hope;

It is interesting to find this in the midst of all these commands and responsibilities. Yet it is one of the most important. Only great motivation can keep us moving in this direction. God has given us a great hope and that hope must be so important and real to us that we rejoice in it. Remember Paul’s own words earlier in this letter.

*And not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness; 4 and steadfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope: 5 and hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us. Rom 5:3-5*

*For in hope were we saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for who hopeth for that which he seeth? 25 But if we hope for that which we see not, (then) do we with patience wait for it. Rom 8:24-25*

The path to eternal life is long, straitened and difficult. There are setbacks, and even looking at the depth of these commands can be discouraging. To remain firm and keep from giving up, we need to have this hope first and foremost in our heart. Hope is not based upon our own works or accomplishments. No one can read the list of duties in this chapter without realizing how little we have done and how far there is to go. We do our very best because he has asked us to do so. But the salvation we hold based on hope is not in ourselves, it is in God’s mercy and God character.

*Blessed (be) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, 1 Pet 1:3-4*

*Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: 19 which we have as an anchor of the soul, (a hope) both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil; Heb 6:17-19*

When all is working as God intending and designed the Gospel to produce then our hope leads us to rejoice even though we do not measure up to our present understanding of our own responsibilities.

*“chairo... to rejoice, be glad b. in a broader sense, to be well, to thrive; ... “ (Thayer, p. 663-664; 5463)*

Our hearts will rejoice and feel glad when we ponder our future. Saving faithfulness is not found in perfectly doing all these things for if that were the case no one would be saved. It is found in our faith and the effort our faith is producing toward them. Think about it! No matter how far we have come, the next time we read these things we will see them more clearly and realize even more how far short of them we still are. It will always be this way. Everyone can do this! We can all hope for God is assessing our faith and love for him based on the trying, not on the doing. Even Paul understood both of these concepts.

*What then is Apollos? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him. 6 I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. 8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. 1 Cor 3:5-8*

*and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, (even) that which is of the law, but that which is*

*through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: 10 that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; 11 if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I could not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing (I do), forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before. 14 I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Phil 3:9-14*

Hope is based on our effort when we are pointed in the right direction. Not in how far we get in that direction. When we are given commands it should not crush our hope, instead our hope in God's mercy and grace and the power of the blood of Christ should cause even more rejoicing in that hope leading us to greater efforts.

*These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. John 16:33*

### **patient in tribulation;**

There are going to be "tribulations" in this world, This is one of those Greek words that is a picture in itself:

*"thlipsis... properly, a pressing, pressing together, pressure... in bibl. and eccles. Greek metaph., oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, straits;... of the afflictions of those hard pressed by siege and the calamities of war,... of the straits of want,... of the distress of a woman in child-birth..." (Thayer, p. 291; 2347).*

The word means pressure and a pressing together. Circumstances and persecutions in this life can create such grave pressure in our heart and in our circumstances that we are nearly crushed. But we are not crushed, we are patient.

*"hupomeno... 1. to remain i.e. tarry behind... 2. to remain i.e. abide, not recede or flee; troop. a. to persevere: absol. and emphatic. under misfortunes and trials to hold fast to one's faith in Christ... b. to endure bravely, bear bravely and calmly: absol., ill-treatment..." (Thayer, p. 644; 5278)*

We abide and live under this pressure without caving in or giving up. We thus persevere and "endure bravely, bear bravely and calmly." This was the patience of Job and all the prophets.

*Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord. 11 Behold, we call them blessed that endured: ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful. James 5:10-11*

The pressure that was placed on Job and upon the prophets was often intense. Yet they remained under them and bravely endured them all. The Lord is full of pity and merciful and in the end, all will be well. Barnabas was very clear in preaching to the brethren in the early church that this would be a normal part of the life of a Christian.

*confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. Acts 14:22*

As long as we live in a sin-cursed world, seeking to be light in the darkness and suffering persecution for the love of the truth we must possess this patience. We must be able to abide under the trials and troubles that come for our faith. If we do not abide under them there is only one other course open to us. We either press on or we shrink back.

*But my righteous one shall live by faith: And if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul. Heb 10:38-39*

Regardless of the type or quality of tribulation, there is only one honorable way to deal with it. We only consider those who endured to be blessed. Those who caved in, quit or gave up are simply forgotten. We must therefore endure.

### **continuing steadfastly in prayer;**

In regard to the prayers we offer up to God, he wants us to "continue steadfastly" in them.

*"proskartereo... to persevere [continue steadfastly] in anything...to give constant attention to a thing... to be steadfastly attentive unto, to give unremitting care to ..." (Thayer p 547; 4342)*

*"proskartereo. ... Its basic meaning is "to stay by," "to persist at," "to remain with." 1. In connection to people it*

means “to be loyal to someone”... 2. in connection with objects it means a. “to occupy oneself diligently with something,” to pay persistent attention to”... “to hold fast to something”... “continually to be in” (Kittel Vol 3 p. 618; 4342)

This is the natural warning to those who have read the Lord’s parable.

*And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint; 2 saying, There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, and regarded not man: 3 and there was a widow in that city; and she came oft unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming. 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. 7 And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night, and (yet) he is longsuffering over them? 8 I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? Luke 18:1-8*

Though it may surprise some, Christians must be continually reminded to “stay by” “persist at” “remain with,” “occupy oneself diligently with” “pay persistent attention to,” and “hold fast” to their prayers. Praying as God asks us to pray is hard work, and is difficult to keep up the quality of continual communion with God he asks of us.

Jesus saw this as a grave difficulty and openly wondered if at his return there would be anyone left on earth with the faith to have done it. Ponder for a moment the different ways God asks us to do it then ask yourself, if the Lord came today, would he find the faith within us to be doing all these things?

*with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, Eph 6:18*

*In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:6-7*

*Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving; 3 withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds; Col 4:2-3*

*pray without ceasing; 1Thes 5:17*

From these passages alone, the great obligations God has laid upon Christians is evident. To continue steadfastly in this will require great attention on our part.

Prayer should never be far from our mind. When we are in temptations or tribulations, when we are striving to grow and overcome, when we are seeking forgiveness and mercy, when we are grateful and want to praise, happy, prayer should be the first thing we think of.

### **13 communicating to the necessities of the saints;**

Saints have needs. In a world of tribulations “necessities” will arise.

*“chreia... necessity, need: such things as suited the exigency, such things as we needed for sustenance and the journey,... to supply what is absolutely necessary for life... there is need, followed by an accusative with infinitive... there is need of something... to have need of (been in want of) something... absol. to have need... the condition of one deprived of those things which he is scarcely able to do without, want, need... one’s necessities...” (Thayer, p. 670; 5532)*

In Acts six it was the widows, in Acts nine it was Dorcas and the widows, in Acts 11, a famine. Jesus spoke of the obligation to fulfill such needs.

*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; 36 naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? 38 And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, (even) these least, ye did it unto me. Matt 25:34-40*

But it is not limited to material needs. There are emotional needs of encouragement and exhortation, care and concern. There are moral needs of reproof and rebuke, forgiveness and

restoration. There are social needs of hospitality. Whenever any need arises God expects the other members of the church to “communicate.”

“*koinoneo*,... a. *to come into communion or fellowship, to become a sharer, be made a partner*... b. *to enter into fellowship, join one’s self as an associate, make one’s self a sharer or partner*...” (Thayer, p. 351-352; 2841).

They are to become a partner with them in their need and thus enter into a fellowship with them, sharing and associating with them in that need. It doesn’t matter what the need is, they need help and God’s children will search for ways to be helpful and to share that burden with them. If it is financial then finances are shared, if it is emotional then emotions are shared, if it is spiritual then those who are spiritual seek to restore them in a spirit of gentleness. He will speak more on this in 12:15-16

### **given to hospitality.**

God expected Christians to have a strong desire to be involved in *hospitality*.

*philoxenia*... love to strangers, hospitality...” )Thayer p. 654; 5381

*xenos, xenia, xenizo, zenodocheo, philozenia, philozenos, ...* 1. Words from the stem *zen-* bear on the one side the concept of “foreign,” “alien”(also “appearing strange” or “creating distaste”) and on the other side that of “guest” ...” (Kittel Vol. 5, p. 1; 5381)

Hospitality is the opening up of the home both to friends and strangers. Both to those whose company we enjoy and whom we can receive comfort and blessings as well as those to whom we can share both our food and our love.

*And he said to him also that had bidden him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbors; lest haply they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. 13 But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14 and thou shalt be blessed; because they have not (wherewith) to recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed in the resurrection of the just. Luke 14:12-14*

When opportunities arise to open up our home, how does God want the living sacrifice to respond. He seeks his children to be “given” to it.

“*dioko*... 1. *to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away*... 2. *to run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing, to run after*... *to press on*: fig. of one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal, 3. in any way whatever *to harass, trouble, molest one*; ... Pass. with a dat. denoting the cause, *to be maltreated, suffer persecution on account of something* ... 4. without the idea of hostility, *to run after, follow after*... 5. metaph. with acc. of thing, to pursue i. e. *to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavor to acquire*...” (Thayer, p. 153; 1377).

The strength of this term to describe the pursuit of something made it the perfect term for persecution which is it’ most common translation in the New Testament. Those who were moved with indignation pursued Christians even to their death. The Spirit often selected this term to give God’s servants the idea that they too are to pursue some things with zeal and determination. The root meaning of this term is to run swiftly in order to catch some person or thing, to press on; to pursue; to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavor to acquire. God wants his living sacrifices to pursue hospitality with zeal and determination. It is an opportunity to do something good with far reaching possibilities.

*But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober unto prayer: 8 above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins: 9 using hospitality one to another without murmuring: 1 Pet 4:7-9*

*Let love of the brethren continue. 2 Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. 3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them that are ill-treated, as being yourselves also in the body. Heb 13:1-3*

The love and kindness with which a man opens his home to strangers in hopes of blessing them is a great tool that all Christians with homes have been given. One never knows the far reaching impact it will bring.

### **14 Bless them that persecute you;**

In an interesting play on words(that we can’t see in English), Paul repeats the verb of the previous

clause. The best we can do in English would be: “pursue(*dioko*) hospitality, bless those who pursue(*dioko*) you.” As noted above, the term *dioko* is used to describe things we pursue with zeal and intensity. When it is the things God has asked us to do, then it is a very good thing. When it is another human being, then it is persecution. The pursuit is with the desire to harm and stop. Thus persecution is a very bitter thing. It was manifested in its worse form in the death of Jesus. But others have also suffered severely at the hands of others.

*Women received their dead by a resurrection: and others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 and others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword: they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth. Heb 11:35-38*

*For, I think, God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, both to angels and men. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye have glory, but we have dishonor. 11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; 12 and we toil, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13 being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now. 1 Cor 4:9-13*

This is the sad reality of the great conflict between darkness and light. The light loves those who have been blinded by the darkness and seeks to bring them to the light, but many who are in darkness hate the light and do not appreciate those who would bring it to them.

*And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved. Jn 3:19-20*

Yet Christians are charged to take the light out into the darkness. Thus obedience to God leads to persecution. This passage guides our hearts on the proper response to persecution. God wants his people to bless when they are being persecuted.

*“eulogeo lit., to speak well of (eu, well, logos, a word), signifies, (a) to praise, to celebrate with praises, of that which is addressed to God, acknowledging His goodness, with desire for His glory, ... (b) to invoke blessings upon a person... (c) to consecrate a thing with solemn prayers, to ask God's blessing on a thing... (d) to cause to prosper, to make happy, to bestow blessings on, ...” (Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words, Vol. I, P. 132-133)*

How can we “speak well of” those who are doing the things listed above to ourselves or our families, loved ones and brethren? How can we “invoke blessings” upon someone who reviled or mistreated us? Before directly answering this question, ponder the words our Lord said on the same subject.

*Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye when (men) shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you. Mt 5:10-12*

*Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: 44 but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; 45 that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. Mt 5:43-45*

If we are to be true sons and daughters of our Father who is in heaven, then we must be like him. Just as he does not want any to perish but for all to come to repentance and all to be saved, so must we. This is the first and most important step in learning how to bless those who persecute us. We cannot be the instrument that provokes to jealousy and saves some of the persecutors (Rom 11:13-14) if we respond to persecution with cursing and bitterness. God wants us to manifest a loving and understanding heart. We must learn from Jesus as he was being nailed to the cross.

*And when they came unto the place which is called The skull, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. 34 And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And parting his garments among them, they cast lots. Lk 23:33-34*

We can love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. But only if we understand that they need our pity and our compassion. If they really knew what they were doing they would not do it. We must love them and help them to find the truth. We are to pray that they might find the truth and repent before it is too late. We are to pray that they might have time for a change of heart, we

could pray that circumstances and events might come about that would lead to them becoming a Christian.

### **bles, and curse not.**

To fully emphasize this, God forbids the negative. Never under any circumstance is the Christian to curse those who are persecuting them. Again, as noted above, this may seem the natural thing to those who have been fashioned according to this world, but those who have prove the will of the Lord have found that it is not the right thing to do.

*“kataraoimai... to curse, doom, imprecate evil on...” (Thayer, p. 336; 2672)*

*“kataraoimai... To curse, to wish evil to, imprecate evil upon. (Harper’s Analytical p. 219)*

Curse is a broad term that can mean both the desire that a bad calamity might occur to someone or to actually ask God to curse them. God does not want us to call down his wrath upon them, nor does he want us to desire that life itself bring terrible things to them.

*Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, And let not thy heart be glad when he is overthrown; 18 Lest Jehovah see it, and it displease him, And he turn away his wrath from him. 19 Fret not thyself because of evil-doers; Neither be thou envious at the wicked: 20 For there shall be no reward to the evil man; The lamp of the wicked shall be put out. Prov 24:17-20*

We must never hope for doom or evil to happen to another. It always leads to the above. If we hope for it what else could we be but glad if it came. Both the root and the trunk of this must be destroyed.

Never should a Christian in prayer, in desire, or in motive hope that evil or doom would fall on another regardless of the provocation. Remember Jesus on the Cross and Stephen while being stoned.

*But I say unto you that hear, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, 28 bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you. 29 To him that smiteth thee on the (one) cheek offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloak withhold not thy coat also. Luke 6:27-29*

### **15 Rejoice with them that rejoice;**

When something good happens to one of our brethren, the natural response ought to be that all would rejoice.

*“chairo... to rejoice, be glad b. in a broader sense, to be well, to thrive; ...” (Thayer, p. 663-664; 5463)*

True love, whether it be *agape*, *philadelphia*, or *philostorgos* will always create joy, happiness and gladness at the good fortune that leads others to rejoice. This is especially true of those who are in the body of Jesus Christ.

*that there should be no schism in the body; but (that) the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or (one) member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 1 Cor 12:25-26*

When a brother or sister rejoices over good fortune, spiritual growth and development, or any other good thing the only natural corresponding emotion for us to feel if we love them is joy and gladness. If we feel anything else then we are jealous, bitter or under the influence of some sinful emotion that is not befitting of a living sacrifice seeking to be transformed.

When good happens to others it is to our benefit, let us rejoice with them.

### **weep with them that weep.**

Along the same lines when those we love and care about have been brought into such circumstances that they are weeping, we should weep with them.

*“klaio, ... to mourn, weep, lament;... a. ...weeping as the sign of pain and grief for the thing signified (i.e. for pain and grief),... b. ...to weep for, mourn for, bewail one...” (Thayer, p. 347; 2799).*

No one weeps and mourns unless they have lost a loved one or had a terrible setback. When such a terrible thing happens, what is the natural reaction of those who are close to them and care about

them? If we cannot find it in our hearts to weep with those who weep, then we must question the sincerity of our love or the depths of our compassion.

*When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews (also) weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, 34 and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. 35 Jesus wept. 36 The Jews therefore said, Behold how he loved him! John 11:33-36*

Those who do not weep over the misfortunes of others are either selfish, apathetic, or cruel. It is a sinful evil to be unfeeling over the difficulties and trials of others. God never looks upon our trials unmoved. He is full of compassion and kindness.

## **16 Be of the same mind one toward another.**

What was listed in detail in the previous verse concerning rejoicing and weeping is now broadened out to everything. Simply put we need to have the same “mind” one toward another.

*“phroneo... 2. to feel, to think... to have an opinion of ones self, think of one’s self... to think, judge...several persons are said phronein to auto, to be of the same mind, ...” (Thayer, p 658; 5426)*

Since the mind is the place where we both think and feel, we are here commanded to think a feel “the same” toward one another and think “the same” way toward one another. The previous passage describes the feelings so there is no reason to remove them from this thought. But this phrase makes a bridge between the emotions in the previous phrase and the intelligence in the next. So whatever a brother or sister is enduring or enjoying needs to be something we empathize with(v 15) and the moral and doctrinal issues each believes ought also to be the same.

*Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and (that) there be no divisions among you; but (that) ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 1 Cor 1:10*

*I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, 2 with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 (There is) one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all. Eph 4:1-6*

All Christians should be of the same mind upon all that the Scriptures reveal on every subject. There should be no divisions among us and we ought to be of the same mind and judgment. This is true of doctrine, morals, and personal conduct. The term “another” “signifies nothing more than again applied to what has either been previously mentioned” (Thayer p. 85-87; 846)

This term simply expresses equivalence. Whatever is in the mind of one person ought to be the same thing that is in our own mind. If he is anxious, be anxious with him, and give him whatever is necessary to be help him be comforted. If he fears, see his fears and help him, if he hopes, hope with him, if he loves, love with him. This is similar to Jesus words in the Sermon on the Mount.

*All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets. Mt 7:12*

We are seeking to see the things in the minds of others as they themselves see them and then be of whatever help we can if we were in the same situation. Even in sinful situations, God asks us to do this.

*Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Gal 6:1-2*

This is also how we become all things to all men. We see what is in their minds and then to the best of our ability we reflect it back to them in the most helpful way.

*For though I was free from all (men,) I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. 20 And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. 23 And I do all things for the gospel’s sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof. 1 Cor 9:19-23*

## Set not your mind on high things,

To accomplish the above so all are thinking and feeling the same things, this is something we must be careful to avoid. Literally as a present active participle, “*minding not high things*” True living sacrifices who are being transformed are not *high things* minded.

“*hupselos... high, lofty; a. properly of place... heaven,... exalted on high... b. metaphorically, eminent, exalted: in influence and honor...*” (Thayer p. 646; 5308)

This term is often used in a good sense in the Scriptures. It was used in the gospels to describe the *high* mountain upon which Jesus was transfigured, as well as the place to which he returned at his ascension when he sat down on the right hand of God. (Heb 1:3). These are obviously not the high things Paul is warning against. All things that God reveals are high high and exalted are always things we should strive for. But those things that only man exalts are not to be in the mind of the transformed.

*And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things; and they scoffed at him. 15 And he said unto them, Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. Lk 16:14-15*

Many of the things exalted in the eyes of men are an abomination to God. Jesus speaks of money, but Jeremiah broadens it out to wisdom, might and riches.

*Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; 24 but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah who exerciseth lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah. Jer 9:23-24*

Paul takes this even further in the first Corinthian letter which was written about the same time as this letter and may have been on his mind.

*For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nought. . . . 26 For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, (are called): 27 but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; 28 and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, (yea) and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: 29 that no flesh should glory before God. 1 Cor 1:18-19; 26-29*

These things must be banished and not even a part of the thoughts of the living sacrifice. How can we bless those who persecute, weep with those and rejoice with those who rejoice if we glory in our own wisdom, might nobility or wealth. Those who have their minds set on exalted things of men cannot be of the same mind toward one another. They are weighing things on the wrong scale. Their responses will always be twisted and tainted. God has already made foolish the things of this world. If we are to glory, we must glory in the things of God.

*that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 1 Cor 1:31*

*The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, 2 Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch: 3 Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for Jehovah hath added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest. 4 Thus shalt thou say unto him, Thus saith Jehovah: Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up; and this in the whole land. 5 And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not; for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith Jehovah; but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest. Jer 45:1-5*

## but condescend to things that are lowly.

The term condescend (ASV; KJV) or associate (NAS NKJV) is actually a difficult word to bring into the English language. It is only used three times in the NT.

*And the rest of the Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that even Barnabas **was carried away with** their dissimulation. Gal 2:13*

*Ye therefore, beloved, knowing (these things) beforehand, beware lest, **being carried away with** the error of the*

wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness. 2 Pet 3:17

The verb in this term is “ago which means to “lead, to bring or to go.” Added to it are two prepositions, *apo* which means “from” and *sun* which means “with.” Therefore the literal meaning of the term is “to be led from with.” Then the context must explain who is doing the leading, along with the source and destination of the leading.

*sunapago* “to carry away with” (*sun*, “with,” and *No.* 6(see below), is used in a bad sense, in Gal. 2:13 and 2 Pet. 3:17, “being carried away with” (RV); in a good sense in Rom. 12:16; the RV marg. “be carried away with” is preferable to the text “condescend” (RV, and KJV), and to the KJV marg., “be contented (with mean things).” A suitable rendering would be “be led along with. (Vine’s Vol. 1 p 170-171)

*sunapago*... .. *to lead away with or together*... passive metaph. *to be carried away with*... with dat. Of the thing, i.e. by a thing, so as to experience with others the force of that which carries away...” (Thayer p. 601; 4879)

In the other two passages where it is used, “being carried away” is the best possible translation. They were being led away from their stand upon the truth and led into error. Barnabas was led from his understanding of the unity of all Jews and Gentiles in Christ, and Peter was led to act like a hypocrite.

What about here? The Spirit bids us to “*be leading ourselves away from*”(present middle participle) the high things we once thought were so important and be leading ourselves into the things that are “lowly”

“*tapeinos*... low ... a. prop. *not rising far from the ground*... b. metaph a. as to condition, *lowly, of low degree*... l. q. *brought low with grief, depressed, B. lowly in spirit, humble*... (Thayer, p. 614; 5011)

God wants us to be as carried away with the influence of the lowly and humble attitude he revealed in the Scriptures that we are as overwhelmed by its influence as Barnabas was! Ponder for a moment how important it is to be carried away with “lowly” things”

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and **lowly** in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Mt 11:29-30*

*But he giveth more grace. Wherefore (the scripture) saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the **humble**. James 4:6*

*Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the **humble**. 6 **Humble** yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; 7 casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you. 1 Pet 5:5-7*

Jesus was lowly like this and was therefore able to offer rest to the souls of his brethren. God reveals that he gives grace to the humble(lowly). We must therefore continually be leading ourselves away from the high and mighty things of man to the humble and lowly things of God.

The basic idea then of this phrase is that God wants us to be carried away, not by the allurements of the world, or the things that are considered high and mighty in the eyes of the world, but instead to be carried off our feet in regard to those people and things that are important in God’s sight. Those things that are called humble and lowly by God are really the things that are truly of great and mighty value. Be carried away by them be enamored and swept off your feet by them. Allow them to do to you what their counterparts in the world do to men.

### **Be not wise in your own conceits.**

What the Spirit had earlier revealed about the Jews in order to guard the Roman Christians against this danger he now places as one of their own responsibilities.

*For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, **lest ye be wise in your own conceits**, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; Rom 11:25*

We must become as familiar as possible with this danger lest it come upon us before we are even aware of it. It was a problem in Israel in nearly every generation including the one Jesus came to preach and help. They were so wise in their own minds that they could not be moved by even the strongest proofs. The problem is not in the wisdom which we all strive for.

“phronmos... (phroneo) a. intelligent, wise... opp to moros... b. prudent, i.e. mindful of one’s interests...” (Thayer, p. 658; 5429)

Since the entire book of Proverbs is dedicated to the goal of making everyone wise and prudent, the problem is not in the wisdom itself.

*The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: 2 To know wisdom and instruction; To discern the words of understanding; 3 To receive instruction in wise dealing, In righteousness and justice and equity; 4 To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion: 5 That the wise man may hear, and increase in learning; And that the man of understanding may attain unto sound counsels: Prov 1:1-5*

The problem here, as the entire context of the sixteenth verse has made clear is in high things versus low things. Human wisdom instead of God’s wisdom, human exaltation instead of God’s exaltation. It is in the term “own conceits” that the problem lies.

“*heautou*... a reflexive pronoun of the 3d person. It is used 1. of the 3d pers. sing. and plur., to denote that the agent and the person acted on are the same... 2. It serves as reflexive also to the 1st and 2d pers. ...” (Thayer, p. 163; 1438).

A reflexive pronoun describes something in which the agent wisdom and the person its acts upon ourselves are the same. It is generally used to emphasize that the action of the verb is reflected by the pronoun. When a reflexive pronoun is used with any verb of action describing strength or ability it is only that person’s strength or ability. To be wise in our own conceits is to be wise in *ourselves*. Wise in our own estimation of ourselves based upon our own assessment of what is wise.

Don’t wise in ourselves. Don’t allow our own mind to set standards of wisdom. God has always despised human wisdom. From its first use in the garden of Eden up to the present moment, human wisdom never takes into account all the facts and it never leads to the right conclusion.

*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. Gen 3:6*

This is what human wisdom always does. God passed judgment on all those whose wisdom only proceeds from themselves and refuses to take his words and advice into consideration.

*O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Jer 10:23*

This is what led God to tell us to trust in him with all our heart never lean upon our own understanding, and refuse to be wise in our own eyes.

*Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, And lean not upon thine own understanding: 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths. 7 Be not wise in thine own eyes; Fear Jehovah, and depart from evil: Prov 3:5-7*

God determined to destroy human wisdom when he devised the gospel.

*For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nought. 20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God’s good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe. 1 Cor 1:19-21*

Remember Jesus own warning on this subject. He compares it to light and darkness. If we gain our wisdom from the Scriptures we have the light. But if we gain our wisdom from ourselves we are walking in the darkness.

*And when the multitudes were gathering together unto him, he began to say, This generation is an evil generation: it seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah. 30 For even as Jonah became a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. 31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them: for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 32 The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here. 33 No man, when he hath lighted a lamp, putteth it in a cellar, neither under the bushel, but on the stand, that they which enter in may see the light. 34 The lamp of thy body is thine eye: when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when it is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. 35 Look therefore whether the light that is in thee be not darkness. 36 If therefore thy whole body be full of light, having no part dark, it shall be wholly full of light, as when the lamp with its bright shining doth give thee light. Luke*

For this reason alone, anyone who lets go of the wisdom of the gospel(which has been specifically designed to appear foolish to those who lean upon their own understanding) will fall away from God.

Being led away with low things will keep us from being wise on our own conceits.

### **17 Render to no man evil for evil.**

Our interactions with others often place us in circumstances where we come away with desires to restore or requite what we have received. Often, this is the wonderful emotion of gratitude which causes us to feel indebted to another for deeds of kindness and generosity. In such cases, we ponder a means to bless them for what they have done. There are other times when the same desire to repay takes a more sinister form. When someone does us an injustice or an act of malice or evil, we again feel that they have created a debt that needs to be repaid. The fleshly mind latches hold of this desire and seeks to “render” evil for evil.

*“apodidomi. 1. a. “To give or do something which one should in fulfilment of an obligation or expectation.” Mt 20:8; 2 Tm. 4:8(a reward); Mt. 21:41 (fruits of the leased vineyard); Mk 12:17...(Taxes); ... b. More particularly “to repay in the form of reward or punishment:” of the divine retribution, Mt. 6:4,6,18; to each according to his works. Rom. 2:6; 2 Tim 4:14...” (Kittel Vol 2; p. 167-168; 591)*

Of its forty plus uses in the NT, it is only used as something not to be done three times, here and:

*See that none **render** unto any one evil for evil; but always follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all. 1 Th 5:15*

*Finally, (be) ye all likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tenderhearted, humbleminded: 9 not **rendering** evil for evil, or reviling for reviling; but contrariwise blessing; for hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing. 1 Pet 3:8-9*

What God knows how to do in the realm of the repayment of evil, man is forbidden to do. It is not his place to repay or recompense an “evil” act.

*“kakos... bad 1. univ. of a bad nature; not such as it ought to be. 2. [morally, i.e.] of a mode of thinking, feeling, acting; base, wrong, wicked:... neut. KAKON, TO evil i.e. what is contrary to law, either divine or human, wrong, crime... spec. of wrongs inflicted... 3. troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, baneful... (Thayer, p. 320; 2556)*

When someone treats us in a way we recognize is “*not such as it ought to be,*” our sense of justice and fair play immediately begins to send out warnings. As children, when this occurred, we knew and expected that parents, teachers, or umpires would step in and stop the foul play and punish the offender. When we grew up, we found that many times these things were not stopped. God gives each person an entire lifetime to make up their mind, hoping for repentance(II Pet 3:9). God did not even step in when they were crucifying his son. Later many repented and justified the value of his longsuffering and mercy to the overall good of many.

This is a clear case of conformed and transformed behavior. The world teaches an eye for an eye. It teaches us to repay in kind whatever treatment we have been given. This is how we feel if we are still conformed and have made no effort to prove the good and perfect and acceptable will of God.

Jesus was very clear about how we will respond if we are truly transformed.

*Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39 but I say unto you, resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. 41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. 43 Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: 44 but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; 45 that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. 46 For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more (than others?) do not even the Gentiles the same? 48 Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Mt 5:38-48*

God has not given a judicial role to his people. As Jesus before us, we are here to save what is lost

not to judge and condemn. It is such a natural transition from childhood frustration and fighting over unfair treatment to the qualities Jesus condemns above. We must learn to monitor our reactions and learn to turn the other cheek, go the second mile and allow others to remain in our debt without rancor or bitterness. In this way, we become true children of our Father in heaven.

### **Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men.**

The term “take thought” is only used three times in the NT. Once for the care with which a parent provides for his children, and twice as it is used here.

“*pronoëo*. The verb means “to perceive in advance,” “to note beforehand,” “to foresee,” ... though it can easily come to mean “to know or to think in advance,” ... The most common sense, ... is ... *providere*, “to care for,” “to be concerned about,” “to make provision for,” “to take thought for” ... In the NT it is used only in the current sense, “to care for” dependents, esp. in one’s own household, 1 Tim. 5:8. In 2 Cor 8:21: *pronooumen . . . kala*, and Rom 12:17: *pronooumenoi kala* ... the meaning is “to have regard for” what is noble and praiseworthy...” (Kittel vol 4 p. 1009-1010)

As is clear from the definition the real idea behind this term is “*to know or to think in advance* .” When one is thinking in advance about situations, they are in a better position to “*make provision for*” and “*have regard for*” an outcome before it happens. It is obviously too late to take thought for something after it has already been done. The outcome sought here is “things honorable.”

“*kalos*... Sept for ... beautiful, but much oftener for ... good; *beautiful*, applied by the Greeks to everything so distinguished in form, excellence, goodness, usefulness, as to be *pleasing*; hence (acc. to the context) i.q. *beautiful, handsome, excellent, eminent, choice, surpassing, precious, useful, suitable, commendable, admirable*;... a. *beautiful to look at, shapely, magnificent*:... b. *good, excellent in its nature and characteristics, and therefore well-adapted to its ends*: ... c. *beautiful by reason of purity of heart and life, and hence praiseworthy; morally good, noble*... d. *honorable, conferring honor*...” (Thayer, p. 322; 2570).

As other men view the lives of God’s children, they are forming opinions about their lives and their decisions. The Christian must take this into consideration in all the decisions he makes regarding his life. The things he does must be “*commendable, excellent in nature and characteristic, well adapted to its ends, morally good and honorable*.” This follows closely with the idea of Peter’s warning to all sojourners and pilgrims here.

*Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lust, which war against the soul; 12 having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that, wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Pet 2:11-12*

We must not be deceived in this matter. We are being closely watched by the world. Our attempts at evangelism and letting our light shine have their attention. They are watching. Our lives are lived “in the sight” of all.

“*enopion*... (l. q. *ho en opi on*, one who is in sight...) ... *before, in the sight of any one*... 1. of occupied place: *in that place which is before, or over against, opposite, any one and towards which another turns his eyes*... 2. *before one’s eyes; in one’s presence and sight or hearing*...” (Thayer, p. 219-220; 1799)

God wants us to be aware of this. He wants us to take it into consideration as we make all our plans. He wants us to take thought before each event and try to see clearly how it will be viewed by others. If it would not be viewed as a completely honorable activity by all, then we must abstain from it. All our plans must be made with this in mind.

*And we have sent together with him the brother whose praise in the gospel (is spread) through all the churches; 19 and not only so, but who was also appointed by the churches to travel with us in (the matter of) this grace, which is ministered by us to the glory of the Lord, and (to show) our readiness: 20 Avoiding this, that any man should blame us in (the matter of) this bounty which is ministered by us: 21 for we take thought for things honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. 2 Cor 8:18-21*

As living sacrifices, we seek to always speak and act in such a way that all men are always impressed that our actions are above reproach. Not only in actuality, but also in outward appearance.

There are many things that are right, but not honorable in the sight of others. Visiting a woman when her husband is not home is right, but may not appear honorable to the neighbors. Purchasing alcohol for an illness or to cook with may be right, but may not be honorable to all who see

someone purchasing it. This simply brings our criteria to do right and wrong to a higher level. Instead of simply looking at God's law and doing as we please we also have to look at the opinions of others. This is the only way to truly have a "good reputation to them who are without."

### **18 If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men.**

The word "possible" actually describes the amount of power that resides within the Christian.

*"dunatos... able, powerful, mighty, strong;... 1. absolutely; a. mighty in wealth and influence... b. strong in soul; to bear calamities and trials with fortitude and patience... strong in Christian virtue... firm in conviction and faith... 2. in construction; a... to be able to do something... b. mighty i.e. excelling in something... c. mighty i.e. having power for something..."* (Thayer, p. 160; 1415)

As much ability, power, might and strength as the Christian has within himself must be used to be at peace with all men. The second clause builds on the idea of the source(*ek*) of this power. This is a power coming from within ourselves. As long as we have any control over the situation and can make it come out peaceful then we have a spiritual obligation as living sacrifices to do it.

Jesus revealed the depths of power that resides in us to do what would bring peace. Yet in spite of all that was within him, there was no peace. When we have control over a situation, when nothing of value is on the line, when we can by taking wrong in no way compromise what is right, then we have a duty to be at peace with all men. Paul and Jesus often found that those they were dealing with did not give them the power or ability to be at peace. When we are asked to swallow our convictions, or when we are brought face to face with a sinful situation, we no longer have the ability to seek for peace. When we have exhausted every option, we have done all within our power as guided by the Holy Spirit then we have done all that is within our power to do and all that is possible.

What is within our power to do to be at peace with all men?

We can turn the other cheek, go the second mile and give to him that asks us(Mt 5:38-42).

We can allow ourselves to be defrauded and take wrong(I Cor 6:7-8).

We can bring ourselves under bondage to all men and do all things for the gospel's sake(I Cor 9:19-23).

We can all love to make us suffer long and be kind, not seek our own, not be provoked, take not account of evil, bear, believe, hope and endure all things(I Cor 13:4-7).

We can put on a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other (Col 3:12-14).

Only after we have done all these things have we done all within our power.

*Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39 but I say unto you, resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. 41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.* Mt 5:38-42

*Nay, already it is altogether a defect in you, that ye have lawsuits one with another. Why not rather take wrong? why not rather be defrauded? 8 Nay, but ye yourselves do wrong, and defraud, and that (your) brethren.* 1 Cor 6:7-8

*For though I was free from all (men,) I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. 20 And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. 23 And I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof.* 1 Cor 9:19-23

*Love suffereth long, (and) is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; 6 rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; 7 beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.* 1 Cor 13:4-7

*Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; 13 forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye: 14 and above all these things (put on) love, which is the bond of perfectness.* Col 3:12-14

These are the things we can do. What we do not have the power to do is compromise truth, give in to ungodliness or succumb to temptation. When a member of the church will not repent of his sins, we cannot seek for peace (I Cor 5:1-13; Mt 18:15-18). When one asks us to renounce the Lord or stop preaching in his name, we cannot seek for peace.

*Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye when (men) shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you. Matt 5:10-12*

*Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. 2 Tim 3:12*

The sad reality is that we can be for peace with all our heart soul mind and strength, and yet still have war because the darkness hates the light and cannot peacefully coexist even when we do all that is within us.

*I am (for) peace: but when I speak, they are for war. Ps 120:7*

## **19 Avenge not yourselves, beloved,**

Once again the Spirit brings up a good quality in the human heart that is prone to abuse and a conformity to the world that needs to be transformed. Each of us has a sense of justice and fairness. It often begins with brothers and sisters in our youth. Something is done we deem unfair and instead of waiting for mother or father, we take matters into our own hands. This always leads to punishment by parents, but seldom banishes it from our heart. Whenever we bear the brunt of injustice it vexes our righteous soul. So what next? We know they need to be punished and we also know that they will not be punished unless we do it. There are many forms of this avenging. We may do little more than let them see our anger and irritation, but that it still avenging. This is why Jesus spoke of turning the other cheek and going the second mile. There is no room for any irritation and desire for revenge if we are always willing to take more. For we are not to “avenge” ourselves.

*ekdikeo ek, from, dike, justice, i.e., that which proceeds from justice, means (a) to vindicate a person's right, (b) to avenge a thing. With the meaning (a), it is used in the parable of the unjust judge, Luke 18:3,5, of the “vindication” of the rights of the widow; with the meaning (b) it is used in Rev. 6:10 and 19:2, of the act of God in “avenging” the blood of the saints; in 2 Cor. 10:6, of the apostle's readiness to use his apostolic authority in punishing disobedience on the part of his readers; ... in Rom. 12:19 of avenging oneself, against which the believer is warned. (Vine's, Vol 1. p 90; 1556)*

This term is used six times in the New Testament and only here is it used in a negative way. The widow had every right to ask a judge to avenge her (vindicate the rights given to her by law), as also did the saints whose lives were taken for their faith and God who gave them their request.

*saying, There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, and regarded not man: 3 and there was a widow in that city; and she came off unto him, saying, **Avenge** me of mine adversary. 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 yet because this widow troubleth me, I will **avenge** her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming. Luke 18:2-5*

*And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and **avenge** our blood on them that dwell on the earth? Rev 6:9-10*

*for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great harlot, her that corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he hath **avenged** the blood of his servants at her hand. Rev 19:2*

It is clear that there is nothing evil in the emotion. It is this sense of right and wrong that leads parents to intervene and punish the child who is doing wrong. It is also the emotion that leads to church discipline and our own criminal justice system. When those to whom God has given the authority to avenge do so then there is no evil. Parents, the church and the civil government are all commanded by God to be avengers. Paul clearly defines where the line is between good avenging and evil avenging. It centers on the word “yourselves.”

*“heautou... a reflexive pronoun of the 3d person. It is used 1. of the 3d pers. sing. and plur., to denote that the agent and the person acted on are the same...(Thayer, p. 163; 1438).*

In ourselves there is to be no avenging. No matter what the wrong and no matter how subtle the

response, no living sacrifice who is transformed will be an agents to do any avenging. No servant of God will take matters into their own hand and punish the offender in some way or another outside of God's prescribed order. Jesus addressed this in his Sermon on the Mount regarding violations of civil law. The "eye for an eye" was only for government not for individuals. Peter spoke of a similar responsibility of servants(employees) with their master(boss) on the job.

*For this is acceptable, if for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what glory is it, if, when ye sin, and are buffeted (for it), ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer (for it), ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 21 For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered threatened not; but committed (himself) to him that judgeth righteously: 1 Pet 2:19-23*

Many times these things are never "avenged" in this life. But they will be avenged.

### **but give place unto the wrath "of God":**

Instead of feeling like we can trust ourselves to properly deal with the injustice we should trust God and let him take over. We should never be that we are first or even last in line to take care of such things. We need to *give up* our place to God.

*"didomi... to give... A. absolutely and generally... B. In construction... I to give something to some one, - in various senses; 1. of one's own accord to give one something, to his advantage; to bestow; give as a gift... 2. to grant, give to one asking, let have... 3. to supply, furnish, necessary things..." (Thayer, p. 145-147; 1325)*

It is interesting that in this word we do not find a need for force. Once we come to know God in all his wisdom and righteous justice blended with mercy, we will "*of our own accord*" "*let God*" have this position or "*place*." We are unworthy of it and we will willingly give it up to him.

*"topos... place; l. e. 1. prop. any portion of space marked off, as it were, from surrounding space; used of a. an inhabited place, as a city, village, district... b. a place (passage) in a book..." (Thayer, p. 628; 5117)*

We call the "*portion of space*" which is "*marked off*" God's *domain*. There are many realms of life where because "*it is not in man that walks to direct his own steps*" we have to leave it to God. We simply do not know how to do this so we leave it to God. We are trespassing into a domain we have no place to be when we start pondering ways and means to get even with someone. "*Giving place*" is willingly and gratefully turning this all over to God. We can trust God to deal with all of this. It is too great a burden for us so we leave it all in God's hands. The truth is that God has completely taken care of this realm. It is exclusively his domain and there is no place for an individual Christian to act in it.

*Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am Jehovah. Lev 19:18*

If we could only see this as a burden being lifted and not as a burden we must carry we will find this a wonderful and refreshing command. We are completely unqualified and can only hurt ourselves to try. First, we do not know the motives and reasons behind the things others do. Second, are no longer objective being involved in the situation and are unable to pass unbiased righteous judgment. Third, we do not have the means to punish anyone. All methods of punishment open to the individual are going to be sinful. Finally, only God can see all, know all and objectively mete out the "*wrath*" necessary for each injustice and sin.

*orge... is related in stem to orgao/orgas, and thus means the "lavish swelling of sap and vigor," "thrusting and uprising" in nature, . . . a. the "impulsive nature" of man or beast, esp. the impulsive state of the human disposition... b. of anger as the most stringent manifestation of powerful inner passion, thumos. ... orge, in distinction from thumos, is essentially and intentionally oriented to ... revenge or punishment... (Kittel Vol 5p. 383-384)*

*"thumos,... (from thuo to rush along ... be in a heat, breathe violently; ... the rage with which the man pants and swells)... In the N.T. 1. passion, angry heat, anger forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding again, (orge, on the other hand, denotes indignation which has arisen gradually and become more settled; (Thayer, p. 293; 2372)*

The distinction between *anger* and *wrath* is important. How many times have we been filled with *anger* ready to punish but after a few hours when the anger is gone we no longer see any need to punish and would have been ashamed if we had done so. *Wrath* on the other hand is reserved for

those things that are unfair and unjust. We are initially filled with a desire to punish and after many days still feel that they need to be punished. Thus *wrath* is a dangerous emotion for man to carry. We need to give up all such feelings and leave it all to God.

God has thoroughly taken care of this realm. There is nothing for Christians to do except stay out of God's way and not trespass into an area in which they have no place. The Holy Spirit has already revealed the full extent of God's wrath and why we don't need to concern ourselves or involve ourselves. God's wrath is comprehensive. There just isn't anything we could add.

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

*Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5 but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6 who will render to every man according to his works: 7 to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life: 8 but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, (shall be) wrath and indignation, 9 tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; Rom 2:4-6*

*Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath (of God) through him. Rom 5:9*

*What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: Rom 9:22*

If we are going to operate in the role God has given to us then wrath only hinders us. We can't do what Jesus did upon the cross or what Stephen did in the midst of being stoned if we are concerned with getting even. Leave the wrath to God. He will not fail in this and we can trust him to do exactly what is necessary regardless of the injustices we endure in this life.

*For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things (done) in the body, according to what he hath done, whether (it be) good or bad. 2 Cor 5:10*

*so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure; 5 (which is) a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: 6 if so be that it is righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, 7 and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, 8 rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: 9 who shall suffer punishment, (even) eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day. II Th 1:4-10*

### **for it is written,**

With the conjunction "*gar/for*" the Spirit gives the reason and grounds why a Christian must give place to wrath. He then quotes a very important passage in Deuteronomy.

*Vengeance is mine, and recompense, At the time when their foot shall slide: For the day of their calamity is at hand, And the things that are to come upon them shall make haste. . . . 39 See now that I, even I, am he, And there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; And there is none that can deliver out of my hand. 40 For I lift up my hand to heaven, And say, As I live for ever, 41 If I whet my glittering sword, And my hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine adversaries, And will recompense them that hate me. 42 I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, And my sword shall devour flesh; With the blood of the slain and the captives, From the head of the leaders of the enemy. 43 Rejoice, O ye nations, (with) his people: For he will avenge the blood of his servants, And will render vengeance to his adversaries, And will make expiation for his land, for his people. Dt 32:35, 39-43*

Parts of this same passage are quoted in Heb 10:26-30. The Old Testament testifies in other places as well that this is one of the fundamental characteristics of God's justice and of his righteous character.

### **Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord.**

This is the same root as the term *avenge* above.

*"ekdikesis... a revenging; vengeance, punishment... Rom 12:19 and Heb 10:30 fr Deut 32:35... to vindicate one*

from wrongs, accomplish an avenging of,..." (Thayer, p. 194; 1557)

This passage from Deuteronomy offers the reason why Christians must give place to wrath. They must get out of God's way because vengeance "belongs" to him.

"*emos*... possessive pronoun of the first person, *mine a. that which I have; what I possess*..." (Thayer p. 207; 1699)

Vengeance is an exclusive possession of God. It belongs to him and we must give place to him. This follows with a promise to the victim or threat to the offender. He will "repay."

"*antapodidomi*... (*anti* for something received, in return *apodidomi* to give back); *to repay, requite*; a. in a good sense; ... b. in a bad sense, of penalty and vengeance; absol.: Rom 12:19; Heb. 10:30... *thlipsin tini*, II Th. 1:6... (Thayer, p. 49; 467)

God will return in kind. He will give back to the degree that they have offended. We have to trust God in this as we do all other realms of life. When he makes this promise to his children, he will do it. Therefore Christians do not have to even be concerned about it. God is going to take care of it in his own time and in his own way. We can therefore focus our attention on much more important matters. It truly comes down to faith and trust. The very heart of vengeance is the desire to see someone pay for what they have done. But if we believe God will repay in full and that they will be punished for what they have done, then we can forget about this and focus instead upon forgiveness and being the instrument by which forgiveness can be given.

## **20 But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink:**

This is actually a continuation of the "it is written above." Just as it is written that vengeance belongs to God, it is also written:

*If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: 22 For thou wilt heap coals of fire upon his head, And Jehovah will reward thee. Prov 25:21-22*

Since vengeance and repayment belong to the Lord, what then should the Christian do with those who have so mistreated them that they are now an "enemy?"

*echthros*... a hater. 1. passively, *hated, odious, hateful*,... 2. actively, *hostile, hating and opposing another*..., used of men at enmity with God by their sin... " (Thayer, p. 265; 2190)

Often a Christian will make enemies simply by being a Christian.

*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. Mk 13:12-13*

This is an extremely uncomfortable and unpleasant situation to be in and there is no way to remove ourselves from it. We have no power to change such an enemy and bring peace. Since God does not punish until life is over what now? Vengeance and grudge bearing are out of the question because God has forbidden it. God bids his living sacrifice who is being transformed to care for the needs of such enemies. If he is hungry or thirsty, then the Christian is to jump at the chance to be of assistance. He is to see it as a possible opportunity to reconcile or even possibly a conversion to Christ.

This is not an exclusive list, but simply two examples of things one could do. If an enemy has any need, a true living sacrifice will rise to the occasion.

## **for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.**

With another "*gar/for*" the reason and cause of the above is set forth. This type of response to an enemy is so out of the ordinary that it will have a powerful impact. From the context it is obvious that it is not the intent of this passage to offer the Christian an alternative way to avenge themselves as though doing them good would be a subtle payback for their actions. As the previous chapter revealed the jealousy of Israel against the Gentile converts would turn some in Israel back to God. In exactly the same way kind acts of a Christian against those who have mistreated them can do exactly the same thing. These are the coals of fire that will result in overcoming evil with good. These are the coals of fire produced by a conscience that realizes that wrong has been done. These are the coals that can change an enemy into a friend and a sinner into a saint. These

are the coals of fire that remove an enemies smug justification for his hatred toward us. Jesus was likely speaking of this when he spoke to Saul.

*And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad. Acts 26:14*

## **21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.**

The word here translated overcome is also translated as victory and conquering.

*“nikao... to conquer... a. to carry off the victory, to come off victorious...” (Thayer p. 425; 3528)*

Christians must not allow evil to have a victory over them. Nor should evil come off victorious in one of our battles. The way of escape is always there and there is no reason to be overcome by it. The battle of good and evil is waged daily. The Spirit bids us to put on the whole armor of God to stand against it (Eph 6:10-18). Evil can only win if it is allowed to kindle in our desires and in the midst of the conflict our desires push us in that direction. It is when we have succumbed to any temptation that we have allowed ourselves to be overcome with evil. This may be a broad final statement or could still be speaking only of the above idea of rising above vengeance and keeping our hearts pure.

As the battle rages, the true victory is to overcome what the evil would impel us to do. True victory is when we vanquish evil and never allow it to take control over us. The desire for vengeance prove we have been overcome by evil. But if we would overcome and be victorious over wrath we will feed and care for our enemies.

The real victory is that every time we replace an evil temptation seeking to conquer us with a good outcome we are breaking a habit and loosening the power of evil over our lives. We are actually conquering it with good. This is how the weapons of our warfare operate.

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh 4 (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds), 5 casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; 2 Cor 10:3-5*

To truly and completely conquer any evil desire, find the good and lawful desire God has given to fulfill that same need and overcome evil with good.