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THE BOOK OF ROMANS

I INTRODUCTION

Much of the heavy labor of Paul's ministry had drawn to a close by the time he wrote his epistle to the Romans. The events of his first, second, and third missionary journeys, as recorded in Acts 13:1 - 20:3 had already passed. A great famine in Jerusalem had caught his attention as an opportunity for the Gentile churches to do a good work. It was while preparing to complete this that the letter to the Romans was written, and it helps us to understand the circumstances in his life at the time of its writing.

but now, I (say), I go unto Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints. 26 For it hath been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. 27 Yea, it hath been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it (to them) also to minister unto them in carnal things. 28 When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain. Rom. 15:25-28

Phoebe had either asked him to write her a letter commending her to the church at Rome, or having told Paul she was going to Rome, he determined to use it as an opportunity to write them this letter.

I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at Cenchreae: 2 that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you: for she herself also hath been a helper of many, and of mine own self. Rom. 16:1-2

Although he did not know it at the time, most of his remaining life would be spent as a prisoner. Soon after his journey to Jerusalem, he was imprisoned, and spent over four years in Caesarea and Rome. It was during this imprisonment that Paul wrote the prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon), and his companion Luke had the time to write Luke and Acts.

But when two years were fulfilled, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and desiring to gain favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul in bonds. Acts 24:27

And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, none forbidding him. Acts 28:30-31

After a few years of liberty which were spent establishing and strengthening the churches in Asia, Crete, and Achaia, (1 Timothy & Titus), he was again imprisoned in Roman where he awaited his death and wrote II Timothy.

For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: 8 henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing. 2Tim. 4:6-8

Romans was likely his sixth epistle. Had written I and II Thessalonians about 52 AD from Corinth on his second missionary journey. He followed this with the I Corinthian letter from Ephesus and

the II Corinthian letter from Macedonia. It is difficult to pinpoint it exactly, but the letter to the Galatians was also probably written either some time before or about the same time as this letter.

Romans is the most comprehensive doctrinal letter of all that Paul wrote. He deals with the simple theme of salvation by faith, but in a sublime and complicated manner. Because of the depths of God's mind that are revealed in this letter, it has become a seed bed for human wisdom and speculation. Many grave errors have been "found" in the book of Romans and taught to those who want to be the people of God. Judging from the outcome of nearly two millennium, it is very probable that the Holy Spirit had this book in mind when he inspired Peter to write this warning.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight. 15 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 stedfastness. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him (be) the glory both now and for ever. Amen. 2Pet. 3:14-18

It is clear from this verse that the same warning set forth in Deuteronomy by Moses ought to always be kept at the forefront of our minds as we struggle with the deep and often incomprehensible wisdom that God is setting forth here.

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

God has revealed only what is in Scripture. There is no more. We are only to preach and teach what has been revealed. If we add our own thoughts in an attempt to make it seem simpler or more comprehensible, we will violate these warnings and "wrest" them to their own "destruction." We must respect God's silence as much as we do his revelation. There will be times when we are tempted to draw conclusions that simply are not there. This is the reason for much of the false teaching and error in the world today. We will try to avoid this by being content to say we don't know when standing on the high peaks of Paul's wisdom. If we are unable to find the bridge that ties things together in the Scriptures, we must refuse to build our own.

The book is full of rich and satisfying doctrines which explain God's intents and plan. He reveals his mind to us. He tells us of his frustrations at the pride, arrogance and folly of fallen man, and explains in great detail his own efforts to redeem and restore him(1-11). The book concludes with practical information on how to give our bodies as living sacrifices, walk by faith and not by sight, and work out our salvation with fear and trembling(12-16).

II OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

- A. Introduction 1:1-15
- B. Theme of the book: Salvation by faith 1:16-17
- C. Development of the theme 1:18-5:21
 - 1. Both Gentile and Jew failed to be righteous by obedience 1:18-3:20
 - 2. The free gift of righteousness by faith given to all men. 3:21-5:11
 - 3. The influence of Adam and Christ considered and expounded upon. 5:12-21
- D. Though saved by grace, personal consecration is still necessary. 6:1-8:39

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III HISTORICAL SETTING

During Paul's second missionary journey, he established the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, and made a brief stop in Ephesus on his way back to Antioch.(Acts 16-18:22) On the third journey, Paul returned to Ephesus and worked there for over two years(Acts 19:1-20:1). During this period of growth throughout the entire province of Asia, many things were occurring. He was continuing to deal with the needs of the congregations previously established.

Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches. 2 Cor 11:28

He was working and laboring with those in Ephesus. Yet there were serious problems at Corinth which reached him just prior to his leaving Ephesus and required the writing of the I Corinthian letter. Within it one sees that the collection for the needy saints at Jerusalem had begun(I Cor 16:1-2), his plans for taking that contribution were crystallizing(I Cor 16:4), and the work at Ephesus was still very productive(I Cor 16:8-9). Not long after he sent this letter, the problems with the silversmiths(Acts 19) occurred, and Paul was forced to leave Ephesus. When he got to Troas, the expected meeting with Titus who had carried the First Epistle to the Corinthians did not occur(II Cor 2:12-13). Though a great opportunity had opened there, Paul felt compelled to sail for Macedonia and continuing searching for Titus. He found him in Macedonia where Titus gave a glowing report of the Corinthian's repentance(II Cor 7:5-7). Paul then wrote and sent them a second letter. After a short period Paul left Macedonia and spent three months in Greece, and finished collecting the alms for Jerusalem(Acts 20:2-6). The letter to the Romans was written at the same time that the collection for the saints was being gathered. Most have concluded that Paul wrote this letter while at Corinth somewhere around 58.

When he left for Jerusalem, it was his intent to journey to Rome after he had made certain that the Jewish Christians would accept the Gentile alms.

When therefore I have accomplished this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will go on by you unto Spain. 29 And I know that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ. Rom. 15:28-29

This is not exactly the way things turned out. He was imprisoned and had to wait over two years before he arrived in Rome as a prisoner. Yet things worked out even better than Paul had planned.

Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things (which happened) unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; 13 so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest; 14 and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear. Phil. 1:12-14

His reception by the brethren in Rome brought great encouragement to him.

where we found brethren, and were entreated to tarry with them seven days: and so we came to Rome. 15 And from thence the brethren, when they heard of us, came to meet us as far as The Market of Appius and The Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. Acts 28:14-15

INTRODUCTION — ROMANS 1:1-15

One must keep in mind that this letter differs from the other epistles because he has never been to Rome and does not know these people. He knows a few (Rom 16), who can verify who he is, but in the first six verses, he introduces himself to the rest of them. Paul explained who he was, what he was, and what relationship he sustained to them in Rome even though he had never been there. He then explained why he had not yet been to Rome, his prayers to God that he might come and his strong desire to come to them (7-15).

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle,

Paul's opening remarks about himself center on his service to Jesus Christ as an apostle, but it is important to notice that he called himself a servant first and apostle second. No higher honor can be claimed by anyone than to be a servant of Jesus. No matter what the capacity of servant one might be, all servants of Jesus are on an equal level. He is one with them. He fights the same battles and enjoys the same victories. Yet being a servant would not give him the right to pen this letter. More is necessary.

No one really knows who established the church in Rome. Possibly it began through those sojourners from Rome listed in Acts 2:10. Regardless of who started the church, the word apostle would carry significance to them. Paul states he was "called" to be an apostle.

"kletos,... called, invited, (to a banquet...); in the N.T. a. invited (by God in the proclamation of the gospel) to obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God through Christ... b. called to (the discharge of) some office...i.e. divinely selected and appointed ..." (Thayer p 350; 2822)

He was a "divinely selected and appointed" apostle. He was not "self appointed" but "God appointed." This gave Paul the authority to write the letter. Nothing further was necessary than these words for all disciples to consider them God's revelation to men:

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

Here was a man inspired and with the right to speak with authority to any congregation of the Lords people.

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

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. 10 But unto us God revealed (them) through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. 12 But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual (words). 1 Cor 2:9-13

The Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul is making certain that the letter is received by all disciples as the Word of God.

separated unto the gospel of God.

The details of Paul's apostleship are set forth here. He did not seek this out. He was "separated" for it.

"aph-orizo,... (horizo to make a horos or boundary); to mark off from(apo) others by boundaries, to limit, to separate:... in a bad sense to exclude as disreputable,. . . in a good sense,... to appoint, set apart, one for some purpose(to do something)..." (Thayer p 90; 874)

God separated him from all other activities. God drew a boundary around Paul. He gave him a realm and an area in which to work. Paul's life work was to preach, teach, and live the gospel of God. God had separated him even from his mother's womb.

But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, (even) from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, 16 to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood: Gal 1:15-16

God revealed it to him at the moment Jesus appeared to him:

And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16 But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; 17 delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, 18 to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me. Acts 26:15-18

Ananias came three days later and added:

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. Acts 22:14-15

Thus Paul's life was mapped out for him on that road to Damascus. He was an apostle who had been taken by God and separated to do his will. Certainly all disciples would want to hear, believe, and be obedient to all that he has to say. Paul speaks very similarly in other letters.

Paul, an apostle (not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead), Gal 1:1

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints that are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus: Eph 1:1

2. Which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures,

This gospel was not something new. It did not originate with Paul and the other apostles in the first century. The books of the prophets living under the old covenant are filled with the promises (good news) regarding the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of his kingdom. Even Abraham had heard it.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, (saying,) In thee shall all the nations be blessed. Gal 3:8

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into. (1Pet 1:10-12)

Nearly every sermon recorded in Acts reveals the preachers going back to the OT prophets and using their writings to prove the soundness of this "new" preaching. Peter quotes two of David's prophecies in his first sermon and Moses in his second. Philip used Isaiah to preach to the Ethiopian eunuch. Paul will abundantly prove these words in the next few chapters. He mentions them here in the beginning of the epistle as incentive to read on. This is not heresy. It is not man made doctrine. It is the fulfillment of God's promises made to the fathers many years earlier. Thus this gospel has the veracity of source (v 1): coming from a called apostle, and the veracity of soundness (v 2): having already been proclaimed by God's prophets in the Old Testament Scriptures. Thus a charge commonly made, that the gospel was contrary to the Old Testament is disarmed.

The Prophets in God's Eternal Purpose

The Bible opens with the simple fact of creation. God doing exactly as he planned and each day ending: *"it was good."* Everything in this creation began with flawless perfection, precisely as God desired. But when man exercised his free will and ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was like breaking a priceless object of china. All was shattered, ruined and vanity (Ecc 1:1-11; 13-15).

From the perspective of Adam and Eve there was nothing left but to sweep up the pieces, throw them into the trash and begin again. They had no answers. There was no wisdom or power within them to fix what they had done. But God's *"ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts"* (Isa 55:8-9). Often man has no answer and is ready to give up. *"When the vessel that he made of the clay was marred ... he made it again another vessel."* (Jer 18:4). Surely God could simply send Adam and Eve to chains of darkness and begin again with another man and another woman. His flawless creation uncursed and prepared for others more worthy than they. God had done this with angels, for *"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, kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."* (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6)

But he did not! He chose instead to begin the plan he had already devised long before. At the moment, when all was lost and broken, God began to reveal the *"manifold wisdom"* of his *"eternal purpose"* *"which he carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Eph 3:10-11). He told the serpent (Satan) that the woman's seed would *"bruise your head."* Later he gave more insight to Abraham promising, *"in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."* (Gen 22:18). Scripture was designed to reveal, prepare, and complete this eternal purpose.

God knew that *"through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned,"* and *"through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners."* But he had already prepared the solution: *"through one man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life."* and *"through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous."* (Rom 5:12, 18-19).

No wonder Paul was so moved with amazement as he ended his theme of justification and righteousness through faith in Christ.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!" Rom 11:33

THINK OF IT! It was not after Adam and Eve **ate** of the tree. It was **before** Adam and Eve were even created and placed in the garden, and **before** they were even warned about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God's eternal purpose and plan for the salvation of all sinners was made before he ever said *"Let their be light!"* He loved us before we were created and planned to pay the cost of our forgiveness before we sinned!

This sounds hard to believe and if we have never seen this or thought of it before it certainly needs more proof than what has been cited up to now. But God has supplied us with abundant proof. He wants us to know this so we will understand the depth of his love and the power of his forgiveness.

Paul told the Romans that his preaching the gospel was *"according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested."* (Rom 16:25-26). God's eternal purpose was not hurriedly devised after they sinned. It was before times eternal (i.e. even before the creation). In speaking of the parables he was teaching, Jesus described what he was doing by quoting one of the prophets. *"I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world"* (Mt 13:35). All that Jesus revealed in his parables were hidden from the foundation of the world and clearly a part of God's eternal purpose. Peter also spoke of this eternal purpose when he said *"him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,"* (Acts 2:23). All the prophecies about Jesus and God's future plans for

saving man were only glimpses into God's eternal purpose. Many of these were revealed hundreds of years before they occurred(Isaiah 53).

Paul told Timothy that God *"saved us, and called us with a holy calling, ... according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal"* (2 Tim 1:8-10) Again, the gift of salvation in Jesus was not devised after Adam sinned. It was given to us *"in Christ before times eternal"*(i.e before the foundation of the world).

He told Titus that our *"hope of eternal life"* was *"promised before times eternal"* (Titus 1:1-2). Think about that. God's promise of eternal life to those of us who had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God had already been promised before times eternal(i.e before the foundation of the world).

All God's plans and purposes were *"kept in silence," "hidden," "given,"* and *"promised,"* before times eternal.

So what period of time is *"times eternal?"* Though it is impossible to understand how far back into eternity these plans go, Paul revealed that *"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world"* (Eph 1:3-5). Thus the plans for the eternal purpose were already complete before the creation. So the plan clearly precedes the events in the first chapter of Genesis.

So though Adam and Eve had no plans beyond the moment they made the wrong choice, God had already thought out and prepared for it. The prophets and the gospel are simply the revelation of these plans.

Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever! Rev 5:13

The Role of the Prophets

When we think about the prophets God sent to Israel, we see them in two different lights. First, we see them as men sent by God to condemn evil, seek repentance, and warn of judgment. Many who never wrote a book(Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha), still did this great work for God by seeking to turn those in Israel from their sins. The writings of the Major(*Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel*) and Minor Prophets(*Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*) are primarily filled with warnings/exhortations, and threats/promises coming directly from God to those living at that time.

But there is another light in which we see the prophets. We see them as men sent by God to reveal the secret things of God's eternal purpose. *"God, spoke to the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners(Heb 1:1)*. Some(Malachi, Joel) have only a few of these prophecies and others(Elijah, Elisha) speak nothing of them. Only a few(Isaiah, David, Ezekiel) wrote many. Though the things foretold of the Messiah and his kingdom are only a tiny portion of their work many who hear the term prophecy equate it with predictions of future events.

Peter explained why there was no reason these prophecies be given by every prophet. The prophecies that opened the veil of God's eternal purpose were not primarily written for them. Though these *"prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you," "it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things."* Though these prophecies *"testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them"* they were given to *"minister"* to us(1Pet 10-12). For this reason these are more closely linked to the new testament than the old covenant.

Consider then the facts as they have now been revealed. God's eternal purpose was fully developed and completed before the foundation of the world(Rom 16:25-26; 2Tim 1:8-10; Titus 1:1-2; Eph 1:3-5; 3:10-11). Knowing the end from the beginning, God gave the glimpses necessary to allow Paul to say that everything he preached was *"saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come"* (Acts 26:22). God revealed enough to give the shadow and outline

of all Paul preached and wrote. These prophets, selected by God, laid the foundation to give those preaching the gospel what they needed to validate their preaching. God revealed enough of his eternal purpose that the apostles only needed to complete the details. Thus the revelation of God's eternal purpose was seamless.

These prophecies gave the scriptural proof needed to convince Israel and save souls. They also revealed enough information for the apostles to make a pithy doctrinal points using the prophecies to give the extra information to make it clear. Even today we use these prophecies to gain a clearer perspective and clarify things in the NT. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah is still read today as one of the most comprehensive summations of the life and death of the Messiah. Jeremiah 23:1-6 and Ezekiel 34 offer additional insight about elders working as shepherds. Jesus ascension and reign are seen more clearly after reading Psalm 2 and Daniel 9:7-14. Finally, prophecy is often the foundation for important NT revelation. For example the Hebrew writer used the order of Melchizedek to help us better see our Messiah as a priest on his throne(Ps 110:4; Heb 5-7).

We are greatly indebted to these prophets. They give us admonition(1 Cor 10), make us wise unto salvation, and help us be complete unto every good work(2 Tim 3:15-18).

How the Prophets were used in Acts

When Paul summed up his preaching as "*saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come*" (Acts 25:22-23), he made it clear that their inspired preaching was simply building upon what God had already revealed to the prophets.

In Peter's first sermon, he stated that the tongues of fire and the speaking in the languages in which they were born "*is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel,*" and the death of Jesus was "*by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.*" He then used David's "*thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, Neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption*" to prove the resurrection and "*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.*" to prove Jesus' ascension and absolute rule as both Lord and Christ(Acts 2:14-36).

In Peter's second sermon, he revealed the events of Jesus death as "*things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets,*" and the remaining time until the second coming are "*the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets that have been from of old.*" He quoted Moses and revealed it was Jesus who was "*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.*" All who refuse obedience would be "*utterly destroyed from the people.*" Finally, "*all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days*" (Acts 3:12-26).

After Peter and John were arrested and threatened, they comforted the disciples, reminding them that David(Ps 2) had spoken about the very events they were then experiencing. "*The kings of the earth set themselves in array, And the rulers were gathered together, Against the Lord, and against his Anointed: 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, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy council foreordained to come to pass.*" (Acts 4:23-31).

Phillip joined the Eunuch using the words of Isaiah 53 and "*beginning from this Scripture, preached unto him Jesus.*" (Acts 8:35).

Peter preached to Cornelius saying "*to him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins*" (10:43).

In Paul's first recorded sermon he said that God raised David to be king of Israel and "*of this man's seed hath God according to promise brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.*" All who lived in Jerusalem "*because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every*

sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him.” His crucifixion had been foretold by the prophets, “when they had fulfilled all things that were written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb.” Through the gospel the apostles “bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers,” for “in that he raised up Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he hath spoken on this wise, I will give you the holy and sure (blessings) of David. Because he saith also in another (psalm), Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption.” Finally as he concluded the sermon he said, “Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets.” (Acts 13:23-41)

When the church gathered in Jerusalem to discuss the Gentiles, James said the prophets had already revealed God’s will. *“Symeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written...”* It was the prophets who were used by *“the Lord, who maketh these things known from of old”* (Acts 15:14-18).

In his defence before Turtullus and Agrippa Paul summed up his service to God with *“so serve I the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets”* (Acts 24:14), and *“I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come,”*(Acts 26:22).

In his discussion with the Jews in Rome, he was *“testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening.”*

Although they preached to Israel hundreds of years before the birth of the Messiah, all Christians should praise and thank God for the blessings these prophets who ministered to us bring today. In the gospels, Acts, and the epistles their words give the foundation and structure of our faith. The things they foreshadowed and revealed were simply placed in their proper context.

As Peter summed it up, *“And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.”* (2 Pet 1:19-21).

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35 or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? 36 For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him (be) the glory for ever. Amen. Rom 11:33-36

3. Concerning his son who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,

The heart of the gospel which God promised through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures is his son. The term “concerning” is a preposition describing something that has a circle drawn around it thus making it the centerpiece of what is being said.

“peri... prep., joined in the NT with the gen. and the acc. ... and indicating that the person or thing relative to which an act or state is predicated is as it were encompassed by this act or state; Lat. circum, circa; around, about... I. with the GENITIVE it denotes that around which an act or state revolves; about, concerning, as touching, etc... a. about concerning... after verbs of speaking, teaching, writing, etc. ...after verbs of hearing knowing, ascertaining,... after verbs of thinking, deciding, supposing, doubting, etc. ... b. as respects [A. V. often (as) touching]... with regard to, in reference to...” (Thayer, p. 502; 4012)

God had promised through the prophets that His son would come through Eve(Gen 3:15), Abraham(Gen 12:1-3), Judah(Gen 49:9-10) and finally through David.

Jehovah hath sworn unto David in truth; He will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. Ps. 132:11;

Once have I sworn by my holiness: I will not lie unto David: His seed shall endure for ever, And his throne as the sun before me. Ps. 89:35-36;

Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness. Jer. 23:5

These scriptures and many others teach clearly that the Messiah must come of the seed of David. In his flesh, he must be a descendant of David. Paul affirmed that Jesus was this son. God's son was born of the flesh (John 1:14). He was a human being, and he descended from Adam through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David. While here in the flesh he was of the seed of David. This completely harmonizes with the Prophets, and any Jew would be stirred to remembrance by this fact. This could be proven, and was so done in Mt and Lk by a simple reference to the genealogies of his parents. Both of whom (Joseph and Mary) were of the seed of David.

But the prophets had declared even more of Him than this. Jesus question to the Pharisees which they could not or would not answer bore this out.

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, 42 saying, What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, (The son) of David. 43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying, 44 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet? 45 If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son? Mt 22:41-45

If Jesus were only David's son in the flesh, then there is no answer to the above question. But He was much more than this. The prophets clearly taught this and the Pharisees should have known.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this. Isa 9:6-7

But God chose a much more powerful method of proving that Jesus is all that He revealed Him to be.

4. Declared to be the Son of God with power,

Paul uses the same root word as he used to describe his own apostleship. Just as God separated Paul to be an apostle, he "declared" Jesus to be the Son of God with power.

"horizo,...(from horos a boundary, limit)... to define 1.to mark out the boundaries or limits (of any place of thing):... 2. to determine, appoint:... Rom. 1:4 (for although Christ was the Son of God before his resurrection, yet he was openly appointed [A.V. declared] such among men by this transcendent and crowning event)..." (Thayer p 453; 3724)

God marked Jesus out by the resurrection from the dead. He drew a boundary around Him and manifested Him to be the Son of God!

The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: 31 inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Acts 17:30-31

Though the prophets taught it, and the miracles proved it (Acts 2:22), God wanted it to be marked out with power! A prophecy is impressive, but a resurrection from the dead is even more "powerful!"

"dunamis...strength, ability, power; a. univ. inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth... b. specifically, the power of performing miracles... c. moral power and excellence of soul... d. the power and influence which belong to riches..."

e. *power and resources arising from numbers...*” (Thayer, p. 159; 1411)

The resurrection is a sign of power. It is a manifestation of the great might of God.

and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might 20 which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, Eph 1:19-20

This is the sign of Jonah, the mighty sign that the Jewish rulers sought was wrought in Christ through the resurrection.

Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Teacher, we would see a sign from thee. 39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: 40 for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Matt 12:38-40

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. Luke 11:29-30

The Jews therefore answered and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? 19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. 20 The Jews therefore said, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days? 21 But he spake of the temple of his body. 22 When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spake this; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. John 2:18-22

After this resurrection, Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with a power that no one else could imitate. No one has the power to raise themselves from the dead. This was the great sign to the human race that Jesus is God’s Son.

according to the spirit of holiness.

The term “according to” is a Greek preposition that sets up a pivot point of comparison like the center point of the balancing scales. It stresses both relationship and proportion.

“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, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 328; 2596)

In relationship to the flesh as the standard, Jesus was born of the seed of David, in relationship to the spirit of holiness as the standard he was declared to be the Son of God with power. What exactly does this mean? Two possible interpretations have been suggested. Since both are taught elsewhere in Scripture, it is only a question of which one Paul had in mind. The “spirit of holiness” may be a contrast to the “according to the flesh” of the previous verse. If this be the case then it is a reference to his deity. If you drop “of holiness” for a moment and reread the thought, it becomes clearer.

who was born of the seed of David according to the(*his*) flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the(*his*) spirit.

If this is the case the “according to the flesh” points to his humanity, and “according to the spirit” points to his Deity. According to the flesh he is the seed of David because of his direct descent by mother to David. According to the spirit he is the son of God. Then “of holiness” simply modifies his spiritual side emphasizing that his spirit was holy, sanctified and consecrated. That is the meaning of the term “holiness”

hagiosune 42 denotes the manifestation of the quality of “holiness” in personal conduct; (a) it is used in Rom. 1:4, of the absolute “holiness” of Christ in the days of His flesh, which distinguished Him from

all merely human beings; this (which is indicated in the phrase “the spirit of holiness”) and (in vindication of it) His resurrection from the dead, marked Him out as (He was “declared to be”) the Son of God; (b) believers are to be “perfecting holiness in the fear of God,” 2 Cor. 7:1, i. e., bringing “holiness” to its predestined end, whereby (c) they may be found “unblameable in holiness” in the Parousia of Christ, 1 Thes. 3:13. In each place character is in view, perfect in the case of the Lord Jesus, growing toward perfection in the case of the Christian. (Vine’s Vol 2 p. 225)

The other view which is also true is that the spirit of holiness refers to the Holy Spirit. If this is what was in Paul’s mind then he is affirming that the Holy Spirit fulfilled a great role in Jesus being declared the Son of God. Though this is true, this term for “holiness” is never used to refer to the Holy Spirit. Though since it is only used three times in the entire New Testament is not be a strong argument against it. It is left to the reader to make up his own mind.

by the resurrection of the dead.

It was “by” the resurrection of the dead that all this was accomplished.

“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 resurrection was source and the cause by which Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power. It was the great sign all had wanted to see. A sign which proved beyond any shadow of doubt that Jesus was the Son of God. Once dead, the Jews reasoned, he could no longer act. God overturned their judgement and gave his verdict of Jesus by raising him from the dead. Thus God himself declared him to be the Son of God by this mighty proof. The power of this testimony is two-fold. As both Peter and Paul pointed out David promised that the Messiah would be raised from the dead.

whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. 25 For David saith concerning him, I beheld the Lord always before my face; For he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: 26 Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; Moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope: 27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, Neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption. 28 Thou madest known unto me the ways of life; Thou shalt make me full of gladness with thy countenance. 29 Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set (one) upon his throne; 31 he foreseeing (this) spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Acts 2:24-32

But God raised him from the dead: 31 and he was seen for many days of them that came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses unto the people. 32 And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers, 33 that God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that he raised up Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. 34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he hath spoken on this wise, I will give you the holy and sure (blessings) of David. 35 Because he saith also in another (psalm), Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption. 36 For David, after he had in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell asleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: 37 but he whom God raised up saw no corruption. Acts 13:30-37

Thus it was a fulfillment of prophecy. Without which he could not have been the valid Messiah and Christ. The second aspect of the resurrection is the power that it took to accomplish it. A power no man could wield. Hence the testimony surrounding the resurrection becomes a mighty bulwark upon which our faith rests.

5. Through whom we received grace and apostleship.

Paul continues to introduce himself to them as one who received both grace and his apostleship “through” this one who has been declared to be the Son of God with power. This is a term that emphasizes the “means or instrument by which anything is affected.”

“*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*... 3. with the gen. of a thing *dia* is used to denote the manner in which a thing is done, or the formal cause... II. of the Ground or Reason one account of which anything is or is not done; *by reason of, because of*... 1. of the reason for which a thing is done, or of the efficient reason, when for greater perspicuity it may be rendered *by*... 2. of the reason or cause on account of which anything is or is done, or ought to be done; *on account of, because of*...” (Thayer, p. 132-135; 1223)

The one who was prophesied to be the seed of David, who was declared to be God's Son through the power of the resurrection that Paul is now an apostle. Paul first received grace and then the apostleship. Paul speaks of both later on in his life.

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 acceptance, 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. I Tim 1:12-16

whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of his power. 8 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; Eph 3:7-8

The grace that put Paul into the church as an apostle was an act of mercy that was a wonder and a marvel to him! He always considered it as a precious and wonderful gift. When he wrote letters he did not use his authority as an apostle as something that made him great and one who ought to be heard. Just the opposite. Often while speaking of his authority as an apostle he would emphasize his own unworthiness and seek to give all the glory for his position to God or to Jesus Christ. It was an act of “grace.”

“*charis*... *grace*; I. e. 1. prop. that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, *sweetness, charm, loveliness*: grace of speech... 2. *good will, lovingkindness, favor*: in a broad sense... (*favor*(i.e. act of favoring...)) ... used of the kindness of a master towards his inferiors or servants, and so esp. of God towards men... ...the word *charis* contains the idea of *kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved*... pre-eminently of that kindness by which God bestows favors even upon the ill-deserving, and grants to sinners the pardon of their offenses, and bids them accept eternal salvation through Christ... *charis* is used of *the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues*... II th. 1:12... 4. *thanks*(for benefits, services, favors)... to be thankful to one...” (Thayer, p. 665-666; 5485)

A source of pleasure and delight to him, an act of good will and kindness from God. This is how Paul saw all the labor and toil, persecutions and tribulations and the authority and inspiration of his apostleship.

unto obedience of faith among all the nations.

Paul now expresses the purpose of his apostleship as he sees it by using the term “unto.”

“*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).

Thus the end, purpose, direction and result of his being an apostle is to bring about “obedience” of faith.

“*hupakoe*.... *obedience, compliance, submission*... obedience rendering to any one's counsels... of the thing to which one submits himself... the obedience of one who conforms his conduct to God's

commands...” (Thayer, p. 637;5218)

Those who believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ and who put their faith in it must be prepared to submit and comply with all that it contains. This was the purpose of Paul’s apostleship both in that day and age and until the end of time. This was also the purpose of this epistle that he was now beginning. This obedience is among(*en* - in the midst of) all the “nations.”

“*ethnos*... 1. a multitude (whether of men or of beasts) associated or living together; a company, troop, swarm:... 2. a multitude of individuals of the same nature or genus... the human race... 3. race, nation... 4. in the O. T., foreign nations not worshipping the true God, pagans, Gentiles... often in plain contradistinction to the Jews... 5. Paul uses *ta ethne* even of Gentile Christians...” (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 168; 1484)

Since the Jews are one of the nations, and the Gentiles are all the rest of the nations, the translators are nearly equally divided on this term. The (ASV, KJV and NKJV) translate it “nations.” While the NAS, NIV, and NAU) translate it “Gentiles.” Interestingly enough when the same term is used in verse 13:

*And I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you (and was hindered hitherto), that I might have some fruit in you also, even as in the rest of the **Gentiles**.*

All the translations translate it Gentiles. It is clear therefore that Paul is emphasizing his apostleship to all the nations(while the other apostles were apostles primarily to one nation(the Jews). This is made even more clearly in verse sixteen.

for his names sake.

The ultimate purpose of the gospel is to bring glory to the Son, and to take His name everywhere.

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: Acts 9:15

6. Among whom (these Gentiles to whom I have been sent to preach and to bring to obedience) ye also are called Jesus Christ’s.

Since the Romans are also called Jesus Christ’s(a synonym for Christian), he has the duty “for his names sake” to bring about their obedience of faith as well. Paul is expressing deep love and concern for them and this is how he wants this letter to be received and read(not just by them, but also by all future generation of Christians. Since they belong to Jesus Christ, Paul as an apostle is charged with giving them aid. This letter is a part of that aid.

With this statement he concludes the first part of the letter which describes whom the letter is from. He now will elaborate on who the letter is addressed to.

7. To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints:

This letter is specifically written to all who are in Rome that are beloved of God and called saints. This narrows the scope of the letter dramatically. Of all the people living in Rome, this letter is only addressed to Christians. The term “beloved” describes those who are esteemed or dear to God.

*“agapetos,... beloved, esteemed, dear, favorite... is applied to Christians as being reconciled to God and judged by him to be worthy of eternal life... Christians bound together by mutual love, are *agapetoi* to one another...” (Thayer, p. 4-5; 27)*

There are some in Rome who stand out from the others. They are God’s esteemed and beloved children who have hearkened to his call and come out of the world. He has washed them in the blood of his son and they are now cleansed and pure. Thus they are therefore called “saints.”

*“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, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 6-7; 39,40)

Thus these brethren have been given a position of great honor and preeminence in the eyes of God. They belong to him exclusively. He has set them apart and consecrated them to his own use.

grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

These were the standard greetings of the day, but when used by Christians always had deeper significance. Greeks greeting Greeks would say "grace - *charis*" to each other, while Hebrews meeting Hebrews would say "peace - *shalom/eirene*." Generally this greeting was not much different than our own "good morning." We don't mean much more by it than "Hello." Sometimes though when we are with a Christian friend and we are feeling close, our "good morning" means much more. We could verbalize it though we seldom do: "I hope God gives you a good morning." It is then lifted from a greeting and becomes a petition. So also here. as seen above(see comments on 1:5), Grace describes that which is sweet and has loveliness, an undeserved kindness that bestowed upon one. Since this comes from God and the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a message of comfort. God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are sending this greeting to those who are called saints. They express their desire that our lives be full of favor and kindness. They also offer "peace."

"eirene,... 1. a state of national tranquility; exemption from the rage and havoc of war... 2. peace between individuals, i. e. harmony, concord... 3. security, safety, prosperity, felicity, (because peace and harmony make and keep things safe and prosperous) ... 5. acc. to a conception distinctly peculiar to Christianity, the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is..." (Thayer, p. 182; 1515)

Both God and Jesus both express their intent and desire that those who are called saints have security, prosperity, and tranquility of soul. God is watching over us, and all is well. This of course the letter will convey to them if they read it carefully and put its doctrinal, moral and practical principles into affect in their lives.

8. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all,

Before moving into doctrinal matters, Paul expresses his personal feelings about the church there in Rome. He is thrilled about their accomplishments even though he is not personally involved with them. Here that rare quality of love in which a man can be concerned and happy with the accomplishments of those with whom he is not personally related is exemplified. Generally a person is concerned for those he is personally associated with. How many people are thankful to God for people they do not even know and have never met? Paul was! All churches of Christ wherever they might be who were doing the will of God were objects of great love and thankfulness to Paul. Test yourself! When you move from one congregation to another do you continue to pray for it? Even more how often do you pray for congregations you have only heard good things about but have never actually been involved with.

Paul is continually praying not only for the congregation for whom he is preaching and laboring, but also for all those he has previously labored for, and not only those, but also for those whom he has never met, but only heard of through reputation. What a man he must have been! What a true likeness to the Lord Jesus who ever lives to make intercession for us.

It is always a special mark of favor when one prays for another. It takes time to remember and to bring petitions before God. This is especially true when one gives "thanks" for another.

"eucharisteo,... 1. to be grateful, to feel thankful,... 2. to give thanks..." (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 263; 2168)

When Paul offers prayers for the Romans, he becomes grateful. When a congregation is striving to live a faithful life of service to the Lord, all who pray for her ought to feel the same feelings Paul here expresses. But think of the great compliment being paid. This letter comes from an inspired apostle who is thanking God for them.

through Jesus Christ.

Paul never forgot the mediation of Christ. Never forgot that it was only because Jesus died on the cross that Paul could go before the Father at all. Never did he miss an opportunity to give the glory to Jesus. He recognized that God the Father was the one with the ultimate authority, power, and dominion, but he also realized and made it very clear that the only reason he had any right to pray to the Father was because of what Jesus had done for him upon the cross.

giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; Eph 5:20

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

For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, 1 Tim 2:5

that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world.

This was the basis of his praise and honor to God.

“hoti... I. the substance or contents (of a statement), that; 1. joined to verbs of saying and declaring... 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)

These brethren have a light that is shining so brightly, and a salt that is savoring so well that not only is Rome aware of them, but so also is the entire world. The church in Rome without the advantages of spiritual gifts(1:11-12) that other churches possessed was a shining beacon brightly gleaming in the darkness of Rome. For this Paul was grateful.

9. For God is my witness,

Paul now uses the strongest of all possible ways for a Christian to affirm something. Jesus warns us not to swear by heaven, or by earth, or by our head(Mt 5:33-37), but Paul shows that this is one very special way that one could affirm something important that he desired to establish. Paul wanted to prove how strong his feelings were for them. The God whom I serve is my witness to my continued prayers for you. Who else though could you call upon to testify for this. Who else would know of the earnest prayers offered up on behalf of others, and yet what a powerful incentive to tell the truth!

whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son

This is not the usual term for serving. It is one that emphasizes the religious service and homage that one offers to the Lord as worship. Paul’s service to the Lord was the same type of service as one gives for hire. But the motivation is not for financial gain, but to honor and glorify God.

latreuo,...a. to serve for hire; b. univ. to serve, minister to, either gods or men, and used alike of slaves and of freemen; in the N. T. to render religious service or homage, to worship, ... in the strictest sense to perform sacred services; to offer gifts....” (Thayer p 372; 3000)

This service was offered to God in his spirit or inner man. It is genuine and sincere, proceeding not from the body out(outward actions), but from the spirit or essence of his being. Paul’s service to God occupies every facet of his being. Paul uses the same preposition to describe from whence this service originated and from whence it found its fulfillment. It is a term that is used either literally or metaphorically to describe what one is in the midst of. It is also used when one desires to convey what one is equipped or furnished with or the instrument or means by which something is accomplished.

“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)

The manner or means which Paul used to express his reverent service to God is through the gospel or good news concerning God's son Jesus. All inward dedication to God must find some outlet to express itself. Paul used his labor in the gospel as his means of reverent service. The emphasis here seems to offer the reason why he was so happy that they too were laboring in the gospel. Since it was his lifework, and the greatest of all his desires, how could there be room for jealousy, or uneasiness that he had not been involved? They were doing the will of God! He would supplement them if he could, but until then he would glorify God for the efforts they were putting forth and the accomplishment of having their faith proclaimed in the entire world.

how unceasingly I make mention of you always in my prayers.

Unceasingly is one of those picturesque Greek words that says a lot more in its meaning than can be expressed by a simply one word translation. It is a compound word made up of the stem which is defined:

"dialeipo,... to interpose a delay, to intermit; leave off for a time something already begun." (Thayer p 139; 1257)

To this is added a suffix which negates the meaning of the word and makes it the opposite. Hence the word means without intermission, incessantly, unceasingly, and always. It infers something that once begun is never stopped.

"adialeiptos... without intermission, incessantly, assiduously (Thayer p. 11; 89)

Always simply adds emphasis. When Paul speaks of his praying for brethren he wants them to know that this is not something he just finished doing one time and then wrote the letter. Paul is telling them that you are never far from my mind, and when I pray, you are in that prayer.

As one studies closely the epistles and life of Paul, one becomes increasingly aware of the amount of time he must have spent in prayer. He practiced what he preached in I Thess 5:17. He prayed without ceasing! In Paul's busy life one might wonder where he found the time to pray as often as he portrays himself. Perhaps like Daniel he prayed three times a day (Dan 6:10). Or, possibly the time that we spend daydreaming, and thinking, Paul spent praying. While eating, working with his hands, walking down the road etc. Paul had disciplined his mind to pray and utilize his time well. Since the Bible does not specify how Paul did it, but does record commands that we do practice it, it is left to the individual to find the best means for himself.

with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching there unto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, 19 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 6:18-19

Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving; withal praying for us also, 3 that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, 4 for which I am also in bonds; that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak Col 4:2-4

Pray without ceasing. I Thess 5:17

There is no doubt from passages such as this one in Romans that Paul has done this in his life. He can tell them with God as his witness that he does pray unceasingly for them. Can we tell anyone that?

10. Making request if by any means now at length I may be prospered

This phrase leads one to the idea that Paul had a strong desire to come and be with the Romans. He was praying constantly that his thanksgiving for their good work might be supplemented with his presence. It had not yet materialized as he would have liked it to, yet he continued to "make request" to God that it might happen.

"deomai... (fr. deo to want, need; whence mid. deomai to stand in need of, want for one's self)... 1. to want lack... 2. to desire, long for.. 3. to ask, beg... b. spec. of requests addressed to God; absol. to

pray, make supplication...” (Thayer p 129)

This is the stronger word for prayer which stresses the need of the one asking. Paul truly wanted to come and be with them. He felt it as a want and a lack which needed to be filled. He desired and longed for its accomplishment. Paul has a strong desire to be “prospered” by the will of God and be allowed to come to them.

“eu-odoo...to grant a prosperous and expeditious journey, to lead by a direct and easy way, ...Much more freq. Tropically, to grant a successful issue, to cause to prosper...” (Thayer p 260-261; 2137)

Paul wants these brethren to know he has been praying for a prosperous journey proceeding from the Lord to bring him to them.

by the will of God to come unto you

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)

Paul believed that God controlled the steps of his life and determined where he would go and how long he would stay. He also believed that his prayers could influence that will. As an apostle perhaps one could argue that God controlled him more and was more interested in his life than other individual Christians. Yet in Mt 6:10; Jesus states that one ought to pray: *Thy will be done*. It is important that each Christian also acknowledge that they want him directing their life. They as Paul want to do only that which is the will of God in their life. This would include direction for our life as well as our learning his will through study of the word. In James 4:15 James reminds us that we are but vapors, and all plans should be made upon the condition that it be the will of the Lord. Our attitude should mirror that of Paul’s in chapter 9. God is the potter we are the clay. God has plans for our life. We can pray for our own desires, as Paul does here, but when circumstances arise that prove to us that God would like us to go in another direction, we should willingly submit to that will no matter how much we wanted to go another way.

Perhaps we would all be more mature and do more for God if we would recognize God as the sovereign and ourselves as his servants used as he would in this world of sin and darkness. Through prayer and preparation, we should seek to put ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

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. II Tim 2:20-21

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

Paul has a powerful longing to see them that was much deeper than just the need to get acquainted with the brethren there are Rome. He longed to see them for a very specific purpose and end.

“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)

It was in order that he might “impart” some spiritual gift.

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)

What occurred at Rome must have been similar in some respects to what happened in Samaria.

Philip could use spiritual gifts, but could not impart them to others. Note what happened after the apostles heard the Samaritans had received the word of the Lord.

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

What Simon saw was the truth. It was only through the apostles hands that the Holy Spirit was given to each member of the church. It was then up to the Spirit to give each gift to the members.

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. 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: 11 but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will. 1 Cor 12:4-11

Since Paul (and no other apostle either) had yet been to Rome, this had not yet occurred. It is possible that Priscilla and Aquila, and others who had been with the apostles had been given a gift, but most in the church had not. The reason Paul wants to give them these gifts is “to the end” that they may be established. Again Paul uses “eis” to emphasize the purpose and goal. Paul believed that only by his coming and laying hands on them and imparting spiritual gifts could the church at Rome be established. Remember that it is still early in the history of the church (about 58) and only 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, the small book incorporated into Acts 15, and possibly James have been written and they likely still have a very limited circulation, and it is very possible that the church at Rome has no NT books. The only means the early church had for discerning the will of the Lord were through the OT Scriptures and the NT prophets, and the others listed above who were involved in the revelation of God’s will. Until that time came, the churches could not be “established” without them.

“sterizo... a. to make stable, place firmly, set fast, fix, ... b. to strengthen, make firm; ... to render constant, confirm, one’s mind...” (Thayer, p. 588; 4741)

The gifts made them stable, strengthened and made them firm. They knew what they were doing. These gifts were only temporary. When the permanent ones were set in place, the temporary ones were done away with.

Love never faileth: but whether (there be) prophecies, they shall be done away; whether (there be) tongues, they shall cease; whether (there be) knowledge, it shall be done away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; 10 but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. 1 Cor 13:8-10

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: 13 till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; 15 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 4:11-16

Today each church becomes established in the method spoken of in Ephesians, but in the first century, while things were given in part, they needed the spiritual gifts. Paul longed to come and give them to them.

12. That is, that I with you might be comforted each of us by the others faith both yours and mine.

Lest they think the only reason he wants to come is a powerful need to help them, he elaborates. There is just as much joy in Paul being there to impart these gifts as there will be in the church for receiving them. He chooses the term “parakaleo” which means to call one to his side to give aid, comfort or advice, but he adds the prefix “sum” to make it a mutual calling to the side to give aid comfort and advice. “*To call upon and exhort at the same time or together*” (Thayer p. 597; 4837). This is the same idea as

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

There will be mutual help when Paul arrives in Rome. He will help them with spiritual gifts and all that an apostle can offer to a congregation, and they will share with him their zeal, faith and appreciation. They will be mutually encouraged and edified. Paul wanted to come for what he can do for them, and what they could do for him.

But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Gal 6:6

Their faith though at a different stage of development would work with his and both would be greatly benefitted. They from his wisdom, experience, zeal, and apostleship, he from their interest, excitement, and new opportunities.

13. And I would not have you ignorant brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you- and was hindered thereto-

Paul was very concerned that a lack of knowledge of this fact might cause them to have a very wrong idea about Paul’s attitude toward them. He did not want them to be “ignorant” of this one point.

“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, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. p. 8; 50)

This was not the first time he had thought about this. There had been many times that he had actually “purposed” and made the plans to come and see them.

“protithemi... 1. to place before, to set forth,... to set forth to be looked at, expose to view... 2. Mid. to set before one’s self, propose to one’s self; to purpose, determine...” (Thayer, p. 552 #4388)

He had proposed to himself that he would do it, but he was hindered when the time came to do it.

“koluo... (fr. kolos, lopped, clipped; prop. to cut off, cut short, hence) to hinder, prevent, forbid... to withhold a thing from anyone, i.e. to deny or refuse one a thing...” (Thayer, p. 366-367; 2967)

It is hard to say exactly what kept Paul from going. The same term was used by Luke to describe the Holy Spirit’s forbidding them to go into Asia. But even there it is not revealed how it was done.

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; Acts 16:6

A partial answer is found later in the book, but even then we are not told whether it was other duties that the Spirit had given him or whether it was simply one open door after another that hindered his plans. Open doors must be entered when they are available regardless of previous plans.

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, 19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit; so that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ; 20 yea, making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was (already) named, that I might not build upon another man’s foundation; 21 but, as it is written, They shall see, to whom no tidings of him came, And they who have not heard shall understand. 22 Wherefore also I was hindered these many times from coming to you: 23 but now, having no more any place in these

regions, and having these many years a longing to come unto you, Rom 15:18-23

that I might have some fruit in you also even as in the rest of the Gentiles.

Paul had been appointed by Jesus as the apostle to the Gentiles

But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; 17 delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, 18 to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me. 19 Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20 but declared both to them of Damascus first and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judaea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance. Acts 26:16-20

It was his duty to help them turn from darkness to the light, and from the power of Satan to God. Paul, up to this time, had not yet been actively involved with the Gentiles in Rome. He longed to be involved in it though and had sought many times to come. The fruit here referred to would be the souls of men converted as a result of Paul's labor. Paul later speaks of the fruit that occurred when he finally did arrive in Rome.

Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things (which happened) unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; 13 so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest; 14 and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear. . . . 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if to live in the flesh,-- (if) this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I know not. Phil 1:12-14; 21-22

14. For I am a debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians both to the wise and the foolish

Paul considered himself to be a "debtor" to those Jesus had sent him out to preach to.

opheiletes... one who owes another, a debtor prop. Of one who owes another money. . . Metaph. a) one held by some obligation, bound by some duty. . . to be under obligation to do something for some one,. . . b) one who has not yet made amends to whom he has injured; one who owes God a penalty or whom God can demand punishment as something due, i.e. a sinner..." (Thayer 469; 3781)

He felt an obligation to preach the gospel to all men. He considered that their blood was upon him until he did so.

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. 1 Cor 9:16

Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God. Acts 20:26-27

Paul has a debt. That obligation and duty required that he preach the gospel to all of them. The arbitrary classes that men had set up in that age were of no consequence to him. He would preach to Greeks and Barbarians. These were the civilized and uncivilized, or those who were brought up in and understood Greek culture and language and those who did not.

hellen. . . 1. a Greek either by nationality, whether a native of the main land or of the Greek islands or colonies 2. in a wider sense the name embraces all nations not Jews that made the language, customs, and learning of the Greeks their own; the primary reference is to a difference of religion and worship (Thayer p. 205; 1672)

"barbaros... 1. prop. one who speech is rude, rough, harsh, as if repeating the syllables barbar... 2. one who speaks a foreign or strange language which is not understood by another... 3. The Greeks used barbaros of any foreigner ignorant of the Greek language and the Greek culture, whether mental or moral, with the added notion, after the Persian war, of rudeness and brutality..." (Thayer p 95; 915)

He would also preach to those who were considered wise and cultured and those who were considered fools.

"sophos... wise, i.e. a. skilled, expert... b. wise, i.e. skilled in letters, cultivated, learned... c. wise in a

practical sense, i.e. *one who in action is governed by piety and integrity*: Eph 5:15; Jas. 3:13;... d. wise in a philosophic sense, *forming the best plans and using the best means for their execution...* (Thayer, p. 582; 4680)

anoetos... 1. *not understood, unintelligible*... 2. *generally active, not understanding, unwise, foolish*... (Thayer, p. 48; 453)

Paul did not allow the mental status or cultural stigmas of the day to influence him in the least. All men have souls and all souls will stand in judgement to be saved or to be lost upon the basis of their obedience or lack of obedience to the gospel. He felt an obligation to all men regardless of their condition.

15. So as much as in me is;

The term “so” refers back to all he has just finished saying.

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)

Because of his obligation to all men and desire to fulfill it, because he has many times purposed to come and was forbidden to do so, and he now believes all the hindrances are removed, there is nothing within him that is hindering his coming.

I am ready also to preach the gospel to you who are at Rome.

Paul’s own state of mind is set forth as being willing and eager to come to Rome.

prothumos 4289, “predisposed, willing” ... is translated “ready” in Rom. 1:15, expressive of willingness, eagerness: in Mark 14:38, ... (Vine’s, vol 3 p 250)

He wants this clearly set forth to those in Rome. In actuality, he will be hindered again when he arrives in Jerusalem and it will be more than four years before he actually arrives there, but he wants to come.

THE THEME OF THE BOOK — ROMANS 1:16-17

16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel

This is the first of six times that the word “for” is used in 1:16-20, and it is used over 140 times in the book. While English has about 14 definitions for the word “for,” Greek has many different words each with its own specific meaning. The term is somewhat complicated but well worth the time to investigate and understand.

¹⁶ οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε [πρῶτον] καὶ Ἑλληνι· ¹⁷ δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται Ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται. ¹⁸ Ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσέβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικία κατεχόντων, *Westcott-Hort Greek NT*

“*gar*... a conjunction which acc. to its composition *ge* and *ara*(i.q. *ar*), is properly a particle of affirmation and conclusion, denoting *truly therefore, verily as the case stands*, “the thing is first affirmed by the particle *ge*, and then is referred to what precedes by the force of the particle *ara*”... Now since by a new affirmation not infrequently the reason and nature of something previously mentioned are set forth, it comes to pass, that by the use of this particle, either the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added, whence arises the causal or argumentative force of the particle, *for*... or some previous declaration is explained, whence *gar* takes on an explicative force *for, the fact is, namely*... Thus the force of the particle is either conclusive, or demonstrative, or explicative and declaratory;...I. Its primary and original Conclusive force is seen in questions... and answers expressed with emotion; where acc to the connection it may be freely represented by assuredly, verily, forsooth, why, then etc.... II It adduces the Cause or gives the reason of a preceding statement or opinion... III It serves to explain, make clear, illustrate, a preceding thought or word: *for, I. q. that is, namely*...” (Thayer, p. 109-110; 1063)

As noted in the above definition, *gar* is actually a compound term made up of two smaller words. The first is “*ge*,” “an enclitic particle” placed in a sentence “to indicate that the meaning of the word to which is belongs has especial prominence and therefore that that word is to be distinguished from the rest of the sentence with greater emphasis” (Thayer p. 110-111; 1065). Added to “*ge*” is the “illative particle” “*ara*” which “intimates that ‘under these circumstances something either is so or becomes so’”(Thayer p. 41; 686). When these words are combined in “*gar*,” it forms a special bridge between thoughts. It is a “particle of affirmation and conclusion.” “By the use of this particle, either the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added. . . or some previous declaration is explained.” “It adduces the cause or gives the reason of a preceding statement.” Because this term is used so many times in the Scriptures(over a thousand times), the student is urged to take the time to fully grasp its significance. The Holy Spirit will use it many times when a conclusion needs to be drawn based on his previous arguments.

Here it further explains why Paul is ready to go and preach at Rome. Paul had no feelings of shame or discomfort when he thought about the gospel, or when he went to a new place to preach it. Perhaps that charge had been hurled against him by some at Rome who wondered why he had not yet come, or maybe Paul had heard it recently as some criticism or another of his work. It is also possible that the Holy Spirit simply put this here because He knew how prone to a sense of “shame” some might feel when presenting the gospel, or confessing their faith in it.

“*epaischunomai* 1870, a strengthened form of No. 1 (*epi*, “upon,” intensive), is used only in the sense (b) . . .”the feeling of shame arising from something that has been done” . . . It is said of being “ashamed” of persons, Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; the gospel, Rom. 1:16; former evil doing, Rom. 6:21; “the testimony of our Lord,” 2 Tim. 1:8; suffering for the gospel, v. 12; rendering assistance and comfort to one who is suffering for the gospel’s sake, v. 16. It is used in Heb., of Christ in calling those who are sanctified His brethren, 2:11, and of God in His not being “ashamed” to be called the God of believers, 11:16. (Vine’s Vol 1 p. 77)

Those who truly believe that the good news(gospel) is the divinely revealed will of God could not feel any shame even though others mock and scorn it. Shame can only come when one begins to wonder if what he believes is less than it proclaims itself to be or is not fully true. Regret and doubt

may lead to shame, but trust and confidence destroys it. Paul does not feel about the gospel, like one might feel if they had an old coat or suit and needed to go to a big city with wealthy people in it. He does not feel that what he preaches has anything to be looked down upon. But there is a tendency among some Christians to feel this way. Even Jesus spoke of the possibility:

For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. Mk 8:38

The reason for this shame centers on the method of God's presentation of the gospel. Though Paul never felt shame, he admits that the worldly wise are going to mock and only those with a firm faith in its truth will withstand the withering scorn they feel toward it.

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. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: 31 that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 1 Cor 1:26-31

When God devised the gospel, he specifically placed within it things that would force the wise and intellectual people of this world to make a choice. They must reject their own wisdom and accept his, or reject God's wisdom and cling to their own.

For the world of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. for it is written I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nought. 1 Cor 1:18

God intentionally placed foolish and base (by this world's reckoning) things to destroy the wise man's wisdom and help him gain humility. God has shown the worldly wise to be fools, yet in their own eyes it is the Christian who is the fool. Each Christian must choose whether they will see the gospel as the world sees it or as God reveals it.

We speak wisdom, however, among them that are full-grown: yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to nought: 7 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: 1 Cor 2:6-7

Paul dealt with this many times in his life and epistles. In Athens the Gentiles mocked when he spoke of the resurrection (Acts 17:32), while the Jews scorned a crucified Messiah.

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. 1 Cor 1:22-24

In Thessalonica Paul thanked God because they had accepted his message not as the word of men, but as it is in truth the word of God (1 Th 2:13), while Peter proclaimed that they had not followed cunningly devised fables, but were eyewitnesses (II Pet 1:16-18). The real point goes back to Moses being told to pick up a serpent by the tail, or to Abraham's being told he would receive a son then after waiting over 20 years for to receive Isaac is then asked to offer him to God as a burnt offering (Gen 22). God tests our faith to see how far it will stretch. There are definitely things in the gospel that stretch the credibility. Things that sound like fables, that are foolish, base or do not even exist. Those who trust in the Lord with all their hearts and do not lean of their own understanding (Prov 3:5), are proud of the gospel. Those who love the praise of men more than the praise from God (Jn 12:42-43) will feel a sense of shame, those who doubt that it is God's inspired revelation may feel a sense of shame, but those like Paul who are confident that it is true and who know that nothing is impossible or too hard for Jehovah (Gen 18:14; Lk 18:27) simply accept all that He says as truth. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because he knew it was true and that it was God's power. We have to make the same choice given to the 12 spies that entered the promised land. 10 were ashamed and 2 felt no shame at all.

But the men that went up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. 32 And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had spied out unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. 33 And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come of the Nephilim: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. Num. 13:31-33

for it is the power of God

For the second time in the verse the term “*gar*” is used to make a conclusion based upon the previous thought. Paul is not ashamed of the gospel because it is God’s power to salvation. This is the “reason and cause for the forgoing statement.” How can one be ashamed of what is powerful and mighty?

There are many words for “power” in the Greek language. The Holy Spirit makes free use of them as He seeks to convey different nuances of meanings. This term for power has found its way into our own language with the term “dynamite.” It refers to something that does not have to have wires or other sources of power hooked into them, but to a power that resides within itself. This is what a stick of dynamite has.

“dunamis... strength, ability, power; a. univ. inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth... b. specifically, the power of performing miracles... c. moral power and excellence of soul... d. the power and influence which belong to riches... e. power and resources arising from numbers...” (Thayer, p. 159; 1411)

Dynamite is so called because it has inherent power that resides within itself by virtue of its nature. The power of dynamite is inside the stick itself. One does not give it a fuse because it has to have power pumped into it, the fuse simply gives one time to get away before the power placed within it explodes. God has created many things in this world which have power inherently residing within themselves. When God created the atom, God put power within it. When God created oil, he put power within it. They have inherent power because of what they are made of. One does not have to add anything to gasoline or to an atom bomb to get them to work. The power is locked within them simply waiting for the means of being used.

When God devised and created the gospel he did exactly the same thing. It is God’s inherent power. Power was actually placed inside of the gospel when it was made. It needs nothing outside of itself for it to work. Its power comes from within. The gospel inherently contains power. Consider some parallel scriptures which state the same thing in different words:

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;

For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. Heb 4:12;

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 Thess 2:13

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, 19 and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might Eph 1:18-19

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generation for ever and ever. Amen. Eph 3:20-21;

All the above scriptures express the same wonderful truth. God’s word contains great inherent power. Like the rain working on the seeds, like a living and active being, it is a power that works within us. The Spirit uses another of the Greek words for power in 1 Th 2:13, *energeo* which is our

energy. God's word "energizes" those who believe it. It is one of the aspects of the exceeding greatness of His power to us how believe that we must have the eyes of our hearts enlightened over. There is nothing to be ashamed of in such a wonderful and powerful thing. Let the exterior covering of folly be forever rejected. We should feel pity toward those who, in their pride, think God's wisdom and power are foolishness, but we should never allow their attitude to cause us to feel any shame.

unto salvation.

The preposition "unto" is used in situations where something previously said is leading toward something else, to describe what one will enter into if they do what was previously described, or what is the purpose and reason of a previous statement. "eis" is used over a hundred times in Romans and over fifteen hundred times in the New Testament.

"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...* a. it stands before nouns designating an open place, a hollow thing, or one in which an object can be hidden... b. before names of cities, villages, and countries, *eis* may be rendered simply *to, towards...* as if it indicated merely motion towards a destination... II. Of Time; 1. it denotes entrance into a period which is penetrated, as it were, i.e. duration *through* a time... B. Used METAPHORICALLY, *eis* I. retains the force of entering into anything, 1. where one thing is said to be changed into another, or to be separated into parts, or where several persons or things are said to be collected or combined into one... 2. after verbs of going, coming, leading, etc., *eis* is joined to nouns designating the condition or state into which one passes, falls, etc. ... 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).

Since the Spirit has just finished speaking about the power of God, this is the direction or purpose for which the power was created. While the rain and seeds are for the power of creating food, and the power of dynamite is directed toward breaking and destroying, the power of the gospel is directed toward and leads to the salvation of mankind. It is the power that brings one into "salvation."

"*soteria... deliverance, preservation, safety, salvation: deliverance from the molestation of enemies,... in an ethical sense, that which conduces to the soul's safety or salvation... in the technical biblical sense, the Messianic salvation... b. salvation as the present possession of all true Christians... c. future salvation, the sum of benefits and blessings which Christians, redeemed from all earthly ills, will enjoy after the visible return of Christ from heaven in the consummated and eternal kingdom of God...*" (Thayer p 612 ;4991)

The obvious implications of the term salvation center on a need for "deliverance," from some danger or "preservation" from some problem. The greater the danger and the more grave the peril, the more wonderful the power that brings salvation. If one is shipwrecked in the sea, a passing boat brings the power of salvation. If one is starving due to a famine, or dying of thirst due to drought, rain and harvest bring salvation. The joy and happiness one feels is directly based upon their understanding of what blessings they derive from being saved. A man who has a terminal illness will be very grateful if the doctor finds a cure. In just the same way the gospel offers God's power that brings salvation. But the blessings and benefits of that salvation are not appreciated until one is made aware of the perils or dangers one is being saved from. In the first three chapters of Romans, the Holy Spirit will clearly reveal the grave need and terrible peril the power of the gospel has saved us from. The gospel places within the reach of all men the mighty power of gaining salvation from all sin and evil. Who could be ashamed of such a mighty power? What a wonderful gift it is!

to everyone that believeth.

With the use of the dative case, the personal interest of everyone who believes is described. This salvation is “to” or “for” every one who believes. This reveals the means, scope, and extent to which the power is offered and unlocked. Just as an automobile is the power of man to rapidly move from one place to another to every one who has a key and has learned to drive and electricity is the power of the light bulb unto the giving of light to everyone who flips the switch. So also the gospel is the power of God to save man to everyone who will believe and put their trust and confidence(faith) in it.

Mankind has already learned that the power of crude oil will do nothing until it is refined and placed into a machine fitted to run it, and that the power of electricity is not harnessed until man devises a means of generating, transporting and utilizing it safely. So also is the gospel. It is the power of God, but it will only operate in the heart of one fitted to use it. That heart must be filled with belief.

“pisteuo... to believe, i.e. 1. intrans. to think to be true; to be persuaded of; to credit, place confidence in; a. univ. to credit, have confidence, to believe one’s words,... b. spec. in a moral and religious reference, pisteuein is used in the N. T., of the conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and law of his soul; thus it stands a. absol. to trust in Jesus or in God as able to aid either in obtaining or in doing something... b. of the credence given to God’s messengers and their words, ... h. used especially of the faith by which a man embraces Jesus, i.e. a conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah - the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God, conjoined with obedience to Christ... to put confidence in one, to trust one... 2. transitively... to intrust a thing to one, i.e. to his fidelity... to be intrusted with a thing... “ (Thayer, p. 511-512; 4100)

This word is the heart of the gospel. It is used over 250 times as a verb and another 325 as a noun and adjective. It describes the trust, confidence, conviction, and credence one gives to God. If we think God’s word is true, are persuaded, give credit, and place confidence in its words, and fully trust that it is in truth the word of God, then and only then is it the power of God unto salvation. Like prayer which it reveals, it must be trusted or it is useless.

But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; 8 a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways. James 1:6-8

The more faith and trust one places in God’s word the more powerful it will become. But will it always work for everyone under all circumstances? Paul uses the term “everyone” to emphasize how universal this is.

“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, ... esp. with nouns designating virtues or vices, emotions, character, condition, to indicate every mode in which such virtue, vice or emotion manifests itself, or any object whatever to which the idea expressed by the noun belongs... c. the whole ... 2. with nouns which have the article, all the, the whole,... with a Plural, all(the totality of the persons of things designated by the noun) 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 is an adjective that makes something universal. “Any, every one of the class denoted by the noun” “all or any of the class indicated.” Here it is used to describe the fact that there is no one on the face of the entire earth who would not unlock God’s power unto salvation if they believed it. Later in his life, Paul explained how he knew the gospel would be God’s power to salvation to everyone who believed it and that no matter what terrible things one had done or horrible situation one found oneself in when they first heard the gospel, they would still be saved:

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 1:15-16

Thus every class and kind of believer, at all times and under all circumstances who comes to the gospel with a trusting and obedient heart will receive the power. We now have all things that are necessary.

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; 2 Pet 1:3

to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

This is the first of three times this expression is used in Romans(2:9-10). Paul will be elaborating more on this idea as the book progresses. The basic idea is set forth by Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey.

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. Acts 13:46.

It was necessary for them to first preach to the Jews. This was God's a part of God's plan and arrangement. Most of the reasons given for this are obvious, some are more complicated. The Jews were the nation specially chosen to bring the Messiah into the world. Their leaders were to be the builders, but Jesus became the stone that the builders rejected.

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. 13 Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. Acts 4:11-12

Jesus chose instead to work with unlearned and ignorant men who were all Jews. They were his own that he had come to, and although many rejected him, they were given the first opportunity to hear.

He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, (even) to them that believe on his name: John 1:11-12

This may also have something to do with the promises God made to the Jews that he would be bringing them back from their captivity.

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. Deut 30:1-6

For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. 13 And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them with good pasture; and upon the mountains of the height of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie down in a good fold; and on fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord Jehovah. 16 I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but the fat and the strong I will destroy; I will feed them in justice. Ezek 34:11-16

The Jews were prepared by the living oracles of God (the Old Testament) and the truly pious would offer a great foothold and advantage to the gospel in every city which had them. It gave to the church the advantage of already having mature sound men immediately after conversion. It made the organization of the church much more quickly available as men would soon be qualified to be elders due to their intimate acquaintance with God and his holiness through the old law. Paul also indicates that by going to the Gentiles, it would provoke the Jews to jealousy. Which may indicate that God wanted them to have the first opportunity to save as many as possible first.

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? 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. 11:11-14

Whatever the full reason, the point is simple. God wanted the Jews to hear the gospel first and then the Gentiles. Yet though the order of was the Jew first and also the Greek, the point of the passage is that both Jew and Gentile now had equal access to the power of God unto salvation through the gospel.

17. For therein is revealed

Paul again uses “*gar* as a “*particle of affirmation and conclusion.*” “*By the use of this particle, either the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added. . . or some previous declaration is explained.*” “*It adduces the cause or gives the reason of a preceding statement.*” By using *gar* Paul will now elaborate on why the gospel is the power of God until salvation to all who believe to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

The term “therein” is actually two words “*en auto*” literally “in it”. The term “*en*” is a preposition used either literally or metaphorically to describe what one is in the midst of. It is also used when one desires to convey what one is equipped or furnished with or the instrument or means by which something is accomplished. The term “*auto*” on the other hand is a pronoun, in this case either “itself” or “it.”

autos. . . pronoun I. self, as used (in all persons genders, numbers) to distinguish a person or thing from or contrast it with another, or to give him (it) emphatic prominence. II autos has the force of a simple personal pronoun in of the third person, answering to our unemphatic he, she, it... III with the article, the same. . .” (Thayer p. 85-87; 846)

Paul is not ashamed of the gospel for “it” is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes because in the midst of “it” something very important is revealed. The gospel “reveals” something, and that revelation is what makes it the power of God unto salvation to all who believe it.

“apokalupto... 1. prop. to uncover, lay open what has been veiled or covered up; to disclose, make bare:... 2. Metaph. to make known, make manifest, disclose, what before was unknown; a. pass. of any method whatever by which something before unknown becomes evident... e. pass. of persons, previously concealed, making their appearance in public... “ (Thayer, p. 62; 601)

This is the same term used to describe the book of Revelation. The gospel will “*lay open what has been veiled or covered up,*” it will “*disclose what before was unknown.*” Something that was previously unknown and not understood has be fully uncovered and disclosed through the gospel.

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, 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

which in other generations 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

Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God; 9 who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not

according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, 10 but hath now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 2 Tim 1:8-10

The gospel is God's power unto salvation because there is something revealed in it that has never been fully disclosed before. What follows therefore will be very similar to Paul's points in Timothy. Not only does the gospel bring life and immortality to light, but it also fully discloses:

a righteousness of God

This is one of the greatest statement that can be made about the gospel. It is its living heart and power. It offers the fulfillment of man's greatest need. All the wretchedness, sorrow and anguish that will be revealed in the first three chapters because man is not righteous is here removed. This is the theme of the book of Romans. How one understands this phrase will have a great impact on how one interprets the book. If one does not understand what Paul is affirming here, then the epistle becomes a mystery which cannot be comprehended. As a matter of fact, some have fallen by misinterpreting this phrase and have gone off on a tangent. A tangent which removed from them not only from a proper understanding and interpretation of this book, but of the gospel itself. A misunderstanding here also has a great impact upon our own feelings of security as believers. For this reason the necessary time it takes to fully understand it must be taken. This verse should be thoroughly understood before moving on to the next section of the book.

There will be two points of importance. The first will be the basic idea behind righteousness, and the second will be whether this is an objective or subjective genitive, i.e. whether this is a righteousness that God possesses(subjective) or a righteousness that God gives to us(objective). The word "righteousness" is a mighty term in both Testaments, and even the Greek language did not find it an easy concept to grapple with.

*"dikaiosune... the virtue or quality or state of one who is **dikaios**; 1. in the broad sense, the state of him who is such as he ought to be, righteousness... the condition acceptable to God... a. univ. ... the doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain to a state approved of God... b. integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling and acting..." (Thayer, p. 149; 1343)*

*"dikaios ... observant of **he dike**, righteous, observing divine and human laws; one who is such as he ought to be;... 1. in a wide sense, upright, righteous, virtuous, keeping the commands of God... a. univ. ... used of O. T. characters noted for piety and probity... Neut **to dikaion**, that which regard for duty demands, what is right... b. the negative idea predominating: innocent, faultless, guiltless... c. preeminently, of him whose way of thinking, feelings, and acting is wholly conformed to the will of God, ... d. contextually, approved of God, acceptable to God... 2. in a narrower sense, rendering to each his due; and that in a judicial sense, passing just judgement on others, whether expressed in words or shown by the manner of dealing with them:... so of God recompensing men impartially according to their deeds,..." (Thayer, p 148-149; 1342)*

"dike... 1. custom, usage, ... 2. right, justice. 3. a suit at law. 4. a judicial hearing, judicial decision, esp. a sentence of condemnation; ... 5. execution of the sentence, punishment, ... to suffer punishment, II Th. 2:9 ..." (Thayer, p. 151; 1349)

As is seen from the definitions the words flow one to another. It begins with "dike" (pronounced "dee-kay") which describes what is just and right. This then flows into "dikaios" which is one who observes "divine and human law" and is therefore "such as he ought to be." This in turn helps us to grasp the term that is placed here in Romans, "dikaiosune" which is "the quality or state of one who is "dikaios." This term too is "him who is such as he ought to be." One who has "integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness of thinking, feeling and acting." But the one problem with all these definitions is that they do not define what "he ought to be." The definition must start one step back from this. If we are to ever understand "righteousness," we must first understand God, because to be what we ought to be we must be like Him. He is righteous, and our understanding of his righteousness is the first step in grasping the term.

For Jehovah is righteous; He loveth righteousness: the upright shall behold his face. Ps 11:7

Righteous art thou, O Jehovah, and upright are thy judgments. . . 142 Thy righteousness is an

everlasting righteousness, and thy law is truth. Ps 119:137, 142

*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne: lovingkindness and truth go before thy face.
. . . 16 In thy name do they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness are they exalted. Ps 89:14, 16*

God has always been righteous. Throughout all eternity he has never changed. It has always been impossible for him to lie or do evil. He lives in perfection and holiness and this standard of life is called righteousness. When God created man in the garden he was created in his image and after his likeness (Gen 1:26). Man was made exactly as God, thus he was upright and pure. The only reason such is not the case today is because of man's sin and evil imaginations.

*Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.
Eccl 7:29*

We were made to reflect His glory, and it is the glorious standard of righteousness that we fall short of when we sin. When speaking later of this same theme Paul makes this very connection.

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; Rom 3:21-23

Righteousness is the desire and mind set to live as God has always lived and wants us to live. It is the desire to think as He as He wants us think, to act as he wants us to act, to talk as he wants us to talk. It is the proper use of our emotions, energies, plans and goals. It is the desire to bring every part of our lives into submission to His will and desire. God revealed that this was the very reason He gave the Jews the Old Law.

And Jehovah commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear Jehovah our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as at this day. 25 And it shall be righteousness unto us, if we observe to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, as he hath commanded us. Deut 6:24-25

The writer of the 119th Psalm saw clearly the nature of keeping God's commandments and testimonies in order to be righteous.

Thou hast commanded thy testimonies in righteousness and very faithfulness. . . . 144 Thy testimonies are righteous for ever: give me understanding, and I shall live. . . . 172 Let my tongue sing of thy word; for all thy commandments are righteousness. Ps 119:138, 144, 172

We cannot know what righteousness is without listening carefully to the revelation of God. John forces us to recognize that our knowledge of God's perfect standards must lead us to imitate them.

If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him. 1 Jn 2:29

7 (My) little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous: . . . 10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. 1 Jn 3:7, 10

Once we understand that this is the lifestyle that each person must live from his youth until death in order to be pleasing to and measure up to God's righteous standards, then and only then are we prepared to properly read and understand the book of Romans. Prior to the gospel, only one method of being righteous existed. One had to perfectly keep the law.

And it shall be righteousness unto us, if we observe to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, as he hath commanded us. Deut 6:25

But not one person ever did. Not one person was ever righteous. But what God reveals in the gospel is that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation because in it he reveals a righteousness of God from faith. A new system of righteousness that does not require perfect obedience is what the gospel reveals and is the theme of the book of Romans.

The grammatical construction "a righteousness of God" is unfortunately somewhat ambiguous in the Greek language, as well as in English. As a matter of fact nearly every time you have a phrase

with two nouns separated by “of” it is capable of two different meanings. Carefully review the following quotation.

“ 5. *The Genitive with Nouns of Action.* Sometimes the noun defined by the genitive signifies action. In this construction the noun in the genitive indicates the thing to which the action is referred, either as subject or object of the verbal idea. a. The *Subjective Genitive.* We have the subjective genitive when the noun in the genitive *produces* the action, being therefore related as *subject* to the verbal idea of the noun modified. . . . *The preaching of Jesus Christ* Rom. 16:25. . . . b. The *Objective Genitive.* We have this construction when the noun in the genitive *receives* the action, being thus related as the *object* to the verbal idea contained in the noun modified. . . . *But the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven.* Mt 12:31” (Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* p. 78-79).

In this quotation the preaching of Jesus Christ is interpreted by Dana and Mantey to be not the preaching about Jesus, but His own preaching. He is the subject and therefore the one doing action. In the second example, it is obvious that it cannot be subjective because the Holy Spirit cannot blaspheme. He is therefore the object of the blasphemy. Thus in subjective genitives the “of God” would always make God the subject and therefore the one doing the acting. If it is subjective then it is God’s personal righteousness. In the objective genitive the phrase “of God” would be the object and would always receive the action. Hence it would be God making others righteous.

Because of this ambiguity, translators and commentators have two possible interpretations. If this is the subjective genitive, then the gospel is powerful because it reveals that God is a righteous being. If it is the objective genitive then it is a righteousness that God gives to us, and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation because it reveals how God makes us righteous. As we read other passages on this same theme, it becomes easier to make the choice.

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, 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. Phil 3:9

Paul wanted a righteousness which is from God by faith. This is what the gospel reveals to man, and it is the theme of Romans. It is also a part of the conclusion he will draw in the fourth chapter.

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." 4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. 5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, Rom 4:1-6

Hence it must be the objective genitive. The Gospel reveals that God makes man righteous by faith.

from faith

The term “from” is the word we get exit from. It describes either things that come out of something or the origin, source and cause by which something is brought about.

“ek before a vowel ex, a preposition governing the genitive. 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 and 1. univ. of the place from which; from a surrounding or enclosing place.. from the interior of... II of the ORIGIN, SOURCE, CAUSE; 1. Of generation, birth, race, lineage, nativity... 2. of any other kind or origin... 3. Of the material out of which a thing is made, etc... 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)

The righteousness of God that the gospel reveals is “*from out of*” faith. Faith is the thing “*from which*” the righteousness of God “*results.*” The gospel reveals that God makes all men righteous “*out of*” “*by*” or from “*the source, origin or cause of*” faith. Much confusion would probably have been averted if the translator had translated this word the same way they did in the phrase “but the

righteous shall live **by** faith later in this same passage.” since it too is the word *ek*.

Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον^S καὶ Ἕλληνι. 17 δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται· ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται.

The gospel reveals that the source of righteousness in the life of a Christian will be his faith, God makes man righteous by his faith. This fits in perfectly with the other Scriptures that say exactly the same thing.

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

For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.” Rom. 4:3

But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, Rom 4:5

For being ignorant of God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth. Rom. 10:3-4

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, 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. Phil 3:9

“The righteousness of God” is the righteousness that God gives to every one when they puts their faith in the gospel. This is the power of God unto salvation and its full elaboration will be the theme of the book. The prepositional phrase that follows expresses God’s purpose and reason for revealing this in the gospel.

unto faith.

The preposition “unto-*eis*” is always used to reveal the purpose or reason for a previous statement(please review the definition of *eis* in Rom. 1:16). He has just finished saying that the gospel reveals that God makes man righteous by means of faith, and now explains what the purpose of that revelation and the purpose of the gospel is. His goal for doing this was to motivate man to believe.

We being Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16 yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. Gal 2:15-16

Paul tells the Galatians that when he was a Jew, the gospel made it clear to him that no one can be justified by the works of the Old Law or by being a Jew. This is what Jesus and Ananias had preached to him. When this was revealed to him, and he finally understood that a man is justified(*dikaioo* - made righteous) through faith in Jesus Christ, and he made the personal decision to believe in Jesus Christ so he to could be justified(*dikaioo* - made righteous) by faith. This is repeated over and over again in all conversions. When a man learns through the gospel that God justifies mankind through faith in Christ it leads them to believe. God revealed all this because he wants man to believe.

But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, (even) to them that believe on his name: John 1:12

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

as it is written the righteous shall live by faith

This quotation from the book of Habakkuk is the Holy Spirit's validation that even the Old Covenant taught this truth. After God told Habakkuk he would destroy the Jews with the nation of Babylon, Habakkuk was shocked and wanted God to further explain how he could use a more wicked nation than Judah to destroy them. This verse was God's response. Those who wish to be viewed as righteous by God will have to trust and believe in him regardless of what God sees the need to do. Those who wish to be righteous must live by their faith and fully trust God even under the most trying circumstances. This passage is quoted again in Hebrews.

For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry. 38 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 10:37-39

In the remainder of this chapter and carrying down through 3:20, Paul will conclusively prove that the gospel is the only means left for both Jew and Gentile to attain true righteousness in the eyes of God. He will do this by showing that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory and cannot seek for a righteousness of their own (1:18-3:20). He will then follow up with a full elaboration and explanation of what God had to do through Jesus Christ to make man righteous by faith in Jesus (Rom 3:21-31). He will then use Abraham as an example. For even Abraham was made righteous by God on the basis of faith (4:1-5:1).

THE APOSTASY OF MANKIND — Romans 1:18-32

The attempt to pinpoint exactly who and when the people Paul described here lived is probably fruitless and in fact would not matter because every apostasy since Adam and Eve takes a similar course. Although we are not given the details prior to the flood, it is clearly revealed with Noah's offspring after they got off the ark that culminated in the tower of Babel and the rise of nations. But only Canaan and His offspring along with Egypt are clearly charted to have followed this exact course. It was definitely a part of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:5), of Egypt and the seven nations of Canaan (Lev 18:3, 22-25; 20:13-16, 23). So while this could be describing the events that culminated in the call of Abraham and the giving up of the Gentiles, it may only be a general description of what every first generation apostasy looked like and where it finally end. This is also what occurred in Israel as the cycle of the Judges began (Jdg. 2-3; 19:22-30) and also during the Kings (1Kings 14:21-24). Since the flow of the text is designed to bring us to "*all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,*" this takes in all generations from the creation. Many different cultures have gone the same course as that described here. So while it is possible Paul was making the distinction between the Jew and the Gentile and that the events here recorded are those immediately after the flood, it is equally possible that Paul is simply discussing where man's apostasy leads (Jewish or Gentile) given enough time regardless of when and where it occurs.

18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven

With "*gar*" Paul now offers the reason why "*a righteousness of God*" needed to be revealed in the gospel. This is the "*particle of affirmation and conclusion.*" Whenever it is used, "*either the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added. . . or some previous declaration is explained.*" Paul said earlier in the letter that he was a debtor to both Greeks and Barbarians (Gentiles) and that he was ready to preach the gospel in Rome. He had stated that he was not ashamed of that gospel since it contained the power of God unto salvation. In verse 17 he explained that the reason it contained this power was because it revealed the righteousness of God through faith. He now gives the second reason for the power of God unto salvation being nothing of which to feel a sense of shame. The truth is that the "*wrath of God*" is revealed from heaven against all the things that men are presently doing. **THEY NEED THE GOSPEL OR THEY WILL EXPERIENCE THE WRATH!** There is a grave need for the gospel for it is the only power on earth that will save man from this "*wrath.*" It is one of the most terrible things God has revealed to man.

"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 wrath,;..." (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 452; 3709)

After pondering the first two chapters of Genesis and considering the gifts God gave man and the obedience and gratitude God had expected in return, one can see why God would be angry with the present state of affairs. It is obvious that the conduct of man would create "*anger, wrath, and indignation,*" and that God would *exhibit* His feelings by *punishing* them." Ungodliness and unrighteousness are insults to Him. As the Creator of the heavens, earth, sea, and all that in them is (Acts), He deserves better than the treatment He has received. Man's selfishness and ingratitude know no limit. Before the flood, God made this very clear:

And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; for it repenteth me that I have made them. Gen 6:5-7

By manifesting this wrath over and over again, He has continued to "*reveal*" it .

"apokalupto... 1. prop. to uncover, lay open what has been veiled or covered up; to disclose, make

bare:... 2. Metaph. to make known, make manifest, disclose, what before was unknown; a. pass. of any method whatever by which something before unknown becomes evident... e. pass. of persons, previously concealed, making their appearance in public... " (Thayer, p. 62; 601)

But how is it now revealed, disclosed, and manifested? How is something that was formerly not known, now clearly understood? Consider a few parallel situations. Perhaps those living before the flood had so forgotten the existence of God and His expectations to the point where they really did not know just how angry they had made God with their evil thoughts, imaginations and violent deeds? Noah told them! He was the preacher of righteousness (2Pet. 2:5) God had sent to warn them about the flood. Perhaps those living in Sodom and Gomorrah did not know how angry they had made God with their vile deeds of immorality, but Lot had told them about it (Gen. 19:7,9). The only means of revelation which God ever used before passing out judgment to them was through the words of his people. God validated Noah's words in the flood and revealed his wrath, He validated Lot's words in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and again revealed it. He did so upon Egypt and the seven nations of Canaan. He will do so again at the day of judgment (Rom. 2:5-11). Peter's words seem to shed additional light on the thoughts revealed here.

knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, 4 and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5 For this they willfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; 6 by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7 but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 2 Pet 3:3-7

God has clearly revealed it. All generations can know it or wilfully forget it. One of the clearest places it is now revealed is in the gospel itself. The wrath of God has never been as clearly manifested and disclosed as it is now through the gospel. The charge to God's people to carry the good news to all men, but an integral part of that good news is the revelation of God's wrath upon all who reject it.

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. Mk 16:15-16

Notice the emphasis. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved. Saved from. what? The obvious answer is from the wrath of God. This is what John warned those who came to his baptism:

He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy repentance, and begin 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. 9 And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Lk. 3:7-9

This is exactly the same warning Jesus gave above. All who refuse to believe and be baptized will be condemned. Condemned because their lives have made God angry, and condemned because they have rejected His offer of pardon and the gift of His Son. Paul had already preached this very message in Athens:

The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: 31 inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Acts 17:30-31

Thus the preaching of the gospel is the revelation of two things to lost and fallen man. First, a righteousness of God by faith is now available to them and if they believe it, it will be the power of God unto salvation for them. Second, the wrath of God rests upon them for what they have done and their only means of escape is to believe the gospel. They may not act upon it, but they could and should have known. Paul will now use the rest of this section to prove to both Gentile and Jew that the wrath of God now abides upon them. There simply will not be any valid excuses on the day of judgment. The wrath of God has been revealed against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of

men.

against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men

With the use of “all-*pas*” every class and kind of “ungodliness” has been revealed to bring the wrath of God.

“asebeia... (asebes q.v.) want of reverence toward God, impiety, ungodliness...” (Thayer p. 79; 763)

“asebes,... destitute of reverential awe towards God, contemning God, impious...” (Thayer p 79; 765)

Many of the Greek words that begin with an “a” are called “*alpha privatives*.” The “a” negates the meaning of the stem and makes it the exact opposite. We do the same thing with the prefix “un” which when placed before profitable makes it unprofitable or placed before godly makes it ungodly. While someone who is godly makes God the most important thing in his life pondering every facet of their life seeking for God’s approval, those who are ungodly have a complete lack of reverence and respect for Him. Not only do they not care, but they are often openly antagonistic.

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” Jude 14-15

They do not care about God or what he thinks about them. Paul describe such as people who though they knew God “*glorified him not, neither gave thanks,*” “*changed the glory of God for the likeness of an image,*” “*worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator,*” and “*refused to have God in their knowledge.*” These are the things that ungodly people do. “Unrighteousness” does with conduct what “ungodliness” does with attitude.

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

Once again an “*alpha privative*” negates the meaning of the term and righteousness becomes unrighteousness. Those who live up to the eternal standards of care, concern and respect for the lives of others that God gave to us when we were created in his image and after his likeness completely preclude anyone from mistreating others. All the laws God has given since were designed to train man in righteousness so that he would learn how to properly treat his God and his neighbor.

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. Matt 22:37-40

Those with God’s wrath abiding upon them are therefore those who have so marred their image that they no longer care for God or their neighbor. They selfishly live only for themselves and care nothing for the damage they do to others. Those who are unjust and unfair make God angry and will someday be punished.

who hinder the truth in unrighteousness.

This is the most serious charge of all. Not only do such men and women act with no regard for a proper respect and reverence toward God as their Creator and with an attitude of respect and honor for the lives and well-being of others. When they hear the truth, they “hinder” it.

“katecho... 1. to hold back, detain, retain... a. of some trouble some condition or circumstance by which one is held as it were bound. b. to restrain, hinder (the course or progress of... c. to hold fast, keep secure, keep firm possession of. 2. A. to get possession of, take... b. to possess...” (Thayer, p. 339-340; 2722).

They try to hold back and hinder its progress both in their own minds and through the persecution of those who are trying to reveal it to others. They do not want to understand it, and it angers them when others do.

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 reprov'd. Jn 3:19-20

They do not like its power, and would hinder and hold it back in any way possible. God's wrath is upon such. This is what Jesus dealt with in the Jewish leaders while he tried to teach the truth.

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter. Mt 23:13

It is an act of unrighteousness which removes the right of others to hear the truth. It makes God angry and will some day be recompensed. Men have tried in so many ways to hinder the truth. They devise competing systems which seek to emulate enough truth to be capable of deceiving. Paul will speak of one of those ways in the next few verses. Then it was idolatry, today evolution has taken its place. Always men seek to hinder the truth. Never will they fully succeed. But God's wrath is waiting upon them for trying.

19. Because that which is known of God is manifested in them.

With the term "because" Paul explains the comments of the previous verse. He uses a triple compound word that conveys the idea of "through this reason or account."

"dioti, conjunction, equiv to dia touto, hoti; 1. on this account that, because..." (Thayer, p. 162; 1360)

This verse takes the thoughts of the previous one and gives the reason for it. It is either a further explanation on the reasons for the wrath of God, or an elaboration on why God is accusing them of hindering the truth in unrighteousness. Since both are true and scripturally sound, it is possible that the Holy Spirit is dealing with both issues. God's wrath is justified because God has manifested his existence to them and they have rejected it, and men are in fact hindering the truth because they are adamantly refusing to consider the evidence of his existence. It certainly removes the point that some want to make that God is not just to hold people responsible for that which they could not have known. Regardless of how much time passes, all the gentiles could have known of God. God can still feel wrath against those who are in the depths of darkness, hundreds of years removed from the choices that their ancestors made that led them into idolatry. He can still punish those who have no personal knowledge of God and accuse them of hindering the truth, because at any moment anyone anywhere has the evidence to make the necessary changes.

No matter how dark the nation becomes, they are still accountable and are hindering the truth in unrighteousness if they do not accept him. It has never been true that those living in any nation did not know God. It has never been the case at any time that those who were involved in ungodliness did not realize they were hindering the truth. Since the beginning of the creation, anyone who wanted to could know God.

"That which is known of God" is a single Greek adjective.

"gnostos... known... that which may be known of God. . ." (Thayer p. 119-120; 1110)

He has never left himself without witness. He has given men an opportunity to repent (2Pet. 3:9) by not destroying them too quickly, but never during all that time, were they left without the necessary evidence.

and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good tidings, that ye should turn from these vain things unto a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: 16 who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways. 17 And yet He left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness. Acts 14:15-17

God is faithful to man. He wants all to come to repentance. He wants all to believe and know the truth. He has so designed the universe that the evidence of His being is not in a book that could be lost or in sayings that might be forgotten. He has placed the evidence that might be known into the creation itself and therefore we are never far from him regardless of what our parents or ancestors did or did not do. This is what the term "manifest" means.

“phaneros... apparent, manifest, evident, known... to be plainly recognized or known...” (Thayer, P. 648; 5318)

No matter how hard man tries, it can never been hidden or covered up. It is evident and apparent to all who will look with a good and honest heart. There has never been a time when those who opened their eyes and looked could not see that which may be known of God. No matter where a person is, no matter what their background or place in history, no one has ever lived who looked for and wished to know God and could not find him. God wants this point clearly set forth. It is too easy a temptation to blame him for the present set of circumstances. So he says it even more clearly. Once again he prefaces it with the term *“gar”* which as a *“particle of affirmation and conclusion”* in which the *“previous declaration is explained.”*

for God manifested it unto them.

The reason why what is known of God is manifested to them is because in fact God did “manifest” it to them.

“phaneroo,... to make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown, to manifest, whether by words, or deeds, or in any other way... to make known by teaching... b. with an acc of the person, to expose to view, make manifest, show one ... Pass. to become known, to be plainly recognized, thoroughly understood...” (Thayer, p. 648; 5319)

God has made *“visible”* and *“known”* what would otherwise be *“hidden.”* He has *“exposed”* it *“to view”* and made it *“plainly recognized,” “thoroughly understood,” “made it visible.”* This is strong language! God himself has left evidence of such great magnitude and placed it in so many places, that Paul by inspiration states that God has personally manifested himself to all men, and that which is knowable of God (listed in the next verse) can be easily perceived by any sane man. Once proven, God then holds all men responsible for their actions.

20. For the invisible things of him

In his sixth and final use of *“gar”* in this section, Paul now elaborates and gives the reasons for the truth that God did in fact manifest himself to all men. God’s wrath is perfectly justified because men must in fact hinder the truth in unrighteousness if they do not believe in him. The reason for this is that though God is invisible, these *“invisible”* things are reflected to man and can still be seen.

“a-oratos, (horao), either, not seen i.e. unseen, or that cannot be seen i.e. invisible,...: (Thayer p 53; 517)

another *“alpha-privative”* this time he takes seen and makes it unseen. That which might be seen, has been hidden and is not capable of being seen. Originally in the garden, God’s presence was a reality that both Adam and Eve could detect.

And they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Jehovah God amongst the trees of the garden. Gen 3:8

But after their expulsion from the garden, man could ignore his presence if they chose to do so.

And Cain went out from the presence of Jehovah, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. Gen 4:16

So it is today. The five senses God gave to man are unable to detect spiritual realities directly. They are now invisible. There are invisible things about God. Things which cannot be detected directly.

since the creation of the world

The term “since” emphasizes the origin of these things.

“APO,... preposition with the Genitive, from, signifying ... Origin ... APO is used ... II Of Origin; whether of local origin, the place whence; or of causal origin, the cause from which... 2. of causal origin, or the Cause; and a. of the material cause, so called, or of that which supplies the material for the maintenance of the action expressed by the verb:... b. of the cause on account of which anything is or is done, where commonly it can be rendered for... c. of the moving or impelling cause... d. of the efficient cause, viz. of things from the force of which anything proceeds and of persons, from whose

will, power, authority, command, favor, order, influence, direction, anything is to be sought;" (Thayer, p. 57-59; 575)

This is not some new development. The origins of these things that reveal the unseen things of God have been in existence from the creation of the world. Though Cain went out from God's presence, he could not get away from these things. They are the validations that echo in the human heart whenever talk of God begins. The world prior to the flood could see this as also could Sodom and Gomorrah. God here reveals that when he was creating the heavens and the earth, he was also placing mirrors to reflect his divinity to man. Some of the things that existence serve the purpose of manifesting the his power and divinity. They are God's billboard, ever sending out the clear message: I AM.

are clearly seen being perceived through the things that are made.

They are neither hard to see or obscure. No one needs a microscope or telescope to see them because they are "clearly seen."

"kathorao... 1. to look down, see from above, view from on high... 2. to see thoroughly... perceive clearly, understand..." (Thayer p 314; 2529)

Though someone might get hopelessly lost in the woods, if he can climb up and get a "look from above," he can get his perspective again, and find his way out. This is exactly what God has done with the universe. Man can create a maze out of life and morality and make it hard to see God clearly, but the things that are made give everyone the ability to rise above all that and get "a view from on high" that helps us get our bearings again. Those who look upon these things can "thoroughly see" and "clearly perceive" the existence of God. No amount of human sophistry from those who seek to hinder the truth can erase them. They are "perceived" by looking at what God has made.

"noeo... 1 to perceive with the mind, to understand... absol. with the addition te kardia... w. an acc. of the thing, ... absol. i.q. to have understanding... 2. to think upon, heed, ponder, consider ..." (Thayer, p. 427; 3539)

As man looks out upon the vastness of the universe with the complexity and precision of the sun, moon and stars and their relation to the earth, he begins "to perceive with the mind" and "to understand" the existence of God. As one "ponders" and "considers" the things that are made, these things burst upon the mind. Everyone knows and understands these things. Nowhere are things so dark and evil that they have been blotted out. No matter where Paul went, he was able to stir up anger and controversy because of this truth. Deep within the heart everyone knows it. Thus when the gospel is preached, one is only bringing out that what all men already see and know. In the multitude and magnitude of the stars, in the manifold beauty of all the creatures and plants. In the abundance of food, in the consistency of the seasons.

And yet he left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness. Acts 14:17

The God that made the world and all things therein, he being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 and he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: 28 for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of you own poets have said. Acts 17:24-28

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

The power of this truth must be fully understood by all. God knew that he would be invisible. He knew that the majority of men would turn their backs on him, and that from time to time among the nations someone would grope and seek for him. He created every facet of the creation with the

goal of revealing himself to man. No matter where man looks, within himself or at any aspect of creation, he sees things about God.

even his everlasting power and divinity-

These things reveal two things about God. His everlasting power and divinity. The term for power is the same one he used in verse 16 to describe the “power” of the gospel. It is *dunamis* which is - “*inherent power*” “*which a person or thing exerts and puts forth.*” God’s inherent power which he exerts and puts forth is manifested by the things that are made. Those who are thinking clearly when they ponder them are powerfully moved by their complexity and power.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? Ps 8:3-4

The moon’s influence over tides and weather because of the tilt of the earth is just one of the multitude of complexities that make the earth what it is. It reveals God’s everlasting power to anyone who is honestly looking at it. It also reveals God’s divinity or divine nature. The creation shows what it takes to be divine. No man or anything remotely like man could create the material creation. Something infinitely wiser and more powerful than man must have done so. The creation bears the marks of it everywhere. The more we understand about the creation, the greater will be our understanding of God’s attributes to have created it.

Just as we judge an artist by the quality and genius of their paintings, an architect by the genius and complexity of their painting, and an inventor by the function and usefulness of their invention, so also we judge our Creator by what he created. How could it be otherwise? The things that are made reveal him to us. Only a being more powerful than the sun and stars could have created them. Only a being of great wisdom and foresight could have created all living things on this planet.

Only a fool looks at a painting and denies that a painter created it. Only a fool looks at a building or an invention and argues against an architect or inventor. In exactly the same way only the fool could look at the physical creation and argue against the existence of God.

The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good. 2 Jehovah looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek after God. 3 They are all gone aside; they are together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Ps 14:1-3

From the kitchen table to the light bulb, from a glass window to a computer design, purpose and forethought are obvious. No one in their right mind would argue against the existence of these things from anything but a being intelligent enough to make them. In this case, all one can do is:

Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own conceit. Prov 26:5

If the material creation shows no design or purpose then neither does anything else. If we can believe the world we live in shows no sign of a creator, then neither does anything else. If one thing in this world proves a creator then so also does the things that are made reveal the everlasting power and divinity of God. This is such an absolute truth that there are not exceptions. He introduces the next clause with the preposition “*eis*” which “*denotes the end to which a thing reaches or extends,*” “*the end by which a thing is completed, i.e. the result or effect.*” The end that these things extend to and are completed leads to the following result or effect.

that they may be without excuse. (ASV) so that they are without excuse. (KJV; NKJ; NAS)

No matter where a man lives, or when he lived, no matter what his upbringing, and no matter what his customs, God has so made the universe that all can and should come to know him. Whether we view this from the point of view of man who (are without excuse), or from the point of God’s view when he created the heavens and the earth this way (may be without excuse) the point is that there simply is no good reason or “excuse” for atheism or idolatry.

“anapalagetos,... without defense or excuse Rom 1:20, also that cannot be defended, inexcusable...” (Thayer p 41; 379)

Their position “cannot be defended” because it is “inexcusable.” God has manifested it to them through the things that are made. He wanted to give them every opportunity to come to repentance, so his longsuffering gave them the time and his evidence gave them the resources.

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

Though this act of love gave them every gift and blessing necessary for them to change their minds, if they refuse to do so, it leaves them no line of defense to make. God thought of everything and gave it to them. They will be without excuse because of the goodness and kindness of God that should have led them to repentance.

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; Rom 2:4-5

They will be unable to defend themselves against the charges that God will bring against them. They will have no excuses. It is the responsibility of all who know the gospel to bring to light what they already know to be true. It may be buried under evolution, or under idolatry, but it will not take a great deal to bring the truth into their minds. It may lie buried under years of skepticism and doubt, but it is still there. It may bring persecution as those in darkness seek to hide what they know from the light you bring, but it is there. Often un-admitted and unclaimed, hindered and vigorously denied, but it is still there.

21 because that, knowing God they

Again Paul uses the word “*dioti*” to express “*through or because of this reason.*” This time it is their lack of excuse that is being elaborated upon. They are without excuse because they knew God but refused to glorify him as God. How could any one offer a valid excuse for the following truth. These people “knew” God.

“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)

They had “*come to know*” him and had “*become acquainted*” with him. Once again, as at the very beginning, we have to ponder who the “they” are that the Holy Spirit is here describing. That these are first generation apostates seems to be clear. It happened to Cain and those who followed him before the flood took them all away. It happened again at some time after Noah’s offspring fell away. It happens every time a first generation believer falls away. It has happened enough times to enough people that God feels justified as using it as the reason why no one will have an excuse.

But can it be said that this is a just indictment upon every Gentile who had ever lived? Is he only speaking of those Gentiles that lived immediately after the flood and were given up by God when he selected Abraham? From the specific things spoken of in the next section, it would appear that he speaks only of the nations which developed from Noah and his three sons. The “they” under consideration here “*changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man*”, and “*exchanged the truth of God for a lie.*” Though all other Gentiles have no excuse and will be condemned, only those first generation apostates who actually did the above will receive this specific indictment. Not all Gentiles worshiped images. Not all Gentiles went into homosexuality. But many of them did and these are the absolute limits on both side of this thing. He begins with those who knew God. After Noah got off the ark, he and his three sons along with their wives knew God. All of them for a time also glorified him.

And Noah builded an altar unto Jehovah, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean bird, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. 21 And Jehovah smelled the sweet savor; and Jehovah said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake, for that the imagination of his heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living as I have done. 22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. 1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply,

and replenish the earth. Gen 8:20- 9:1

If the ages of those bearing children in Gen 11:10-27 are carefully added up:

Name of Patriarch	Age at birth of son		From years after birth flood until died		How long to call of Abraham did they die?	
Noah at time of flood	600		0	350	-17	
Shem at birth of son	100			500	121	
Arphachshad was born	2 years after flood.		2		Gen 11:10	
Arphachshad	35	Shelah	37	403	Gen 11:12	60
Shelah	30	Eber	67	403	Gen 11:14	103
Eber	34	Peleg	101	430	Gen 11:16	164
Peleg	30	Reu	131	209	Gen 11:18	-27
Rue	32	Serug	163	270	Gen 11:20	66
Serug	30	Nahor	193	200	Gen 11:22	126
Nahor	29	Terah	222	119	Gen 11:24	-20
Terah	70?	Abraham	292		Gen 11:26	?
Abraham	75	Called from Ur	367		Gen 12:4	

Then it was only 9 generations from those who got off the ark to the call of Abraham which spanned a little less than 400 years. Noah was 600 when he entered the ark (Gen 7:6) and was 950 when he died (Gen 9:29) so when Abraham was born, Noah was still alive and had about 60 more years to live. He had only been dead about 17 years when Abraham was called. In all fairness we do not know how many still believed in God when Abraham was called (Melchizedek and Job at the least), while Abimelech had some knowledge of God (Gen 20). But the call of Abraham out of the Gentile world marked the beginning that this passage seems to pinpoint it speaks of God's giving them up. We know that from the flood to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah for the very reasons listed here occurred during this time frame. We also know that most of the people who lived after Noah were still alive at the call of Abraham, and all of them could have spoken to Noah, Shem, Arphachshad, Shelah, and Eber. What happened? How could they all have spoken to those who witnessed the flood and spoke with God and still turn to Sodom and Gomorrah? These people knew God! They knew who he was, they knew he was the creator of the heavens and the earth, they knew of the flood, and they knew they were responsible.

glorified him not as God.

What they did not do is "glorify" him as God.

"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... 4. By a use not found in prof. writ. to make glorious, adorn with lustre, clothe with splendor; a. to impart glory to something, render it excellent... b. to make renowned, render illustrious, i. e. to cause the dignity and worth of some person or thing to become manifest and acknowledged ton logon tou theou II Th 3:1;... c. to exalt to a glorious rank or condition..." (Thayer, 157; 1392)

They knew him as God and as their Creator, they knew him as their savior at the flood, yet they failed to honor and praise him. They refused to "praise, extol, magnify," and "celebrate" him as God. They did not "honor" him as God. They stopped appreciating and holding him in high esteem. One might consider that people could not do this, but we see it repeated every time a Christian falls away from the living God. One day they are faithful and zealous, grateful and content. The next they slowly slip away until they are exactly where these people here were. It happens over and over again generation after generation.

neither gave thanks.

"eucharisteo,... 1. to be grateful, to feel thankful,... 2. to give thanks..." (Thayer, 263; 2168)

They stopped being grateful and feeling thankful for all that God had done. Though God is

responsible for every good thing everyone possess,

Be not deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 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.
Jas 1:16-17

Not everyone is grateful and thankful for them. Everything that makes life and everything that makes life worth living was created by God for us to receive and be grateful for. When someone refuses the gratitude then the following steps are the natural outcome. Those who got off the ark they knew what God had given them. But they gradually drifted away from feeling grateful toward him for it. They took it all for granted, and because they stopped feeling their dependence upon God they became selfish and arrogant. They took everything God gave them and offered nothing in return. They didn't thank him, honor him, or worship him. They lived as though there was no God, and soon to them, he no longer existed. Everyone who does this is on a course of destruction. No one can live like this without serious damage being done. They then

became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened.

This process reached its end when their ability to "reason" "became vain."

"dialogismos ... the thinking of a man deliberating with himself; hence 1. a thought, inward reasoning... the reasoning of those who think themselves to be wise... 2. a deliberating, questioning, about what is true: Lk. 24:38; when in reference to what ought to be done, hesitation, doubting..." (Thayer, p. 139; 1261)

Something happened to the ability of these people to think clearly. Their "*inward deliberations, thoughts and reasonings*" went through a transformation. The less they thanked God, held him in esteem and offered him worship, the more they "became vain" in their reasoning ability.

"mataiotes... (mataios, q.v.) a purely bibl. and eccles. word... vanity; a. what is devoid of truth and appropriateness... II Pet 2:18; b. perverseness, deprivation... Eph 4:17; c. frailty, want of vigor..." (Thayer p 393; 3153)

"mataios... devoid of force, truth, success, result [A. V. uniformly vain] ... useless, to no purpose.... ta mataia vain things, vanities, of heathen deities and their worship..." (Thayer, p. 392-393; 3152)

The inner working of their minds was "*devoid of truth*" and hence they became deluded. They began to think and reason within themselves in senseless and foolish ways. Their meditations and contemplations about life became empty and foolish. There was no truth to their thoughts, and no value in them. As God watched, their minds spiraled downward, it began when they stopped giving thanks. They lost their true purpose for life. As they sought for a new purpose of their own choosing they ended up with empty folly. But it did not stop there. As it continued their hearts became "senseless" and then darkened.

"asunetos... unintelligent, without understanding,... stupid...." (Thayer p 82; 801)

There is an obvious downward spiral here. It began with a lazy inattention that kept them from giving thanks. This led to a lack of desire in glorifying him as God. After a time their heart became vain in its ability to reason. They still could think clearly then, they simply chose not to. Now they can no longer reason in their hearts. Their hearts have become senseless. They are "*without understanding*" and even "*stupid.*" There is no longer any sense or understanding in their actions. God still speaks like this of first generation Christians who fall away.

For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, 6 and (then) fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. 7 For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh off upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God: 8 but if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned. Heb 6:4-8

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than

having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 2 Pet. 2:20-22

Why anyone with a full knowledge of God reject Him and withhold their thanks, honor and praise is beyond a reasonable person's ability to understand. But that it could then reach a point where there is nothing anyone can even say to bring them back to repentance reveals that such a heart has become senseless and "darkened."

"skotizo... to cover with darkness, to darken; Pass. be darkened; pass. to be covered with darkness, be darkened... metaph. of the eyes, viz. Of the understanding..." (Thayer p 580; 4654)

Everything went dark for these people. There just wasn't any light left in their hearts to respond to any truth that sought entry. They were unable to reason clearly on any subject. This is a frightening example of the consequences which ingratitude and lack of reverence brought upon them. But still it did not end, it continued to spiral downward to ever lower levels.

22. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools,

In their own minds they continued to "profess" that they were wise.

"phasko... to affirm, allege, to pretend or profess..." (Thayer p 650; 5335)

This is how they saw themselves. This is what they affirmed about their thoughts and reasonings. While God saw everything going dark and filled with folly, they saw themselves as becoming ever greater and wiser. They affirmed and truly believed that they were "wise."

"sophos... wise, i.e. a. skilled, expert... b. wise, i.e. skilled in letters, cultivated, learned... c. wise in a practical sense, i.e. one who in action is governed by piety and integrity: Eph 5:15; Jas. 3:13;... d. wise in a philosophic sense, forming the best plans and using the best means for their execution..." (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 582; 4680)

This may be one of the saddest things here revealed. They have lost their sanity and equilibrium. In their minds they are growing wiser as they really become more and more foolish. The further they remove themselves from God and his will, the wiser they grow in their own ability to chart their own lives. They affirm to grow ever more skilled, cultivated and learned. They feel that they are gaining a greater grasp on the things around them. While the truth is that they "became fools

"moraino... 1. in class. Grk. to be foolish, to act foolishly 2. in Bibl. Grk. A. to make foolish... to prove a person or thing to be foolish... b. to make flat and tasteless: pass of salt that has lost its strength and flavor..." (Thayer p 420; 3471)

They began "to act foolishly", and "to be foolish. While claiming to be the wisest they became the most foolish. In light of the truth, this is what all men do when they reject the knowledge of God and launch out on their own to explain how we got here and what our purpose is. Any other explanation but the truth that God created us and that He wants us to serve and glorify him is a foolish myth. All who believe in foolish myths have become a fool. God's servants already see this folly. Those who exchange their communion with God for a life of rebellion are acting foolishly. Why would anyone who knows God devise a system of idolatry, or atheism to replace him? There is no sense to anything one does once they reject the God who made them. Their next step is nearly incomprehensible. It would not be believed possible if it had not been demonstrated over and over again throughout human history.

23. Changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible men, and of birds, and four-footed beast, and creeping things.

"allasso... to change, to cause one thing to cease and another to take its place... to exchange one thing for another... to transform..." (Thayer p 28; 236)

They "caused one thing to cease and another to take its place." They "exchanged one thing for another." This didn't happen over night, but it did happen in one lifetime! It began when they stopped glorifying God, it continued as they stopped thanking him for all he had given them. It grew more realistic as their senseless hearts were darkened and they became vain in their reasonings. Finally the day came when they took all the glory and honor that emanated from God and should have been returned to him in the form of praise and adoration to cease and then they allowed

another to take his place. They could not change God, but they could trade and exchange him for something else. They had a glorious, powerful, incorruptible (not subject to decay, immortal) God. A God with the power to bless and help them. They knew him, but they did not want him. They exchanged his “glory” for something else.

“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)

God has a “*magnificence, excellence, preeminence, dignity, and grace*” that nothing else can mimic. God has a “*majesty*” and “*honor*” that is irreplaceable. He alone can answer prayer, he alone lives eternally in heaven. He alone is God. They traded that away and what did they get in return? They exchanged everything God could give them for idolatry. They exchanged the God who lived, who knew, who cared and wanted to help, and had the power to help for the images of animals and men.

They that fashion a graven image are all of them vanity; and the things that they delight in shall not profit; and their own witnesses see not, nor know: that they may be put to shame. Isa 44:9, (see also 44:10-23)

It was a shameful and foolish thing that they did, but once that step was taken, the damage was done to their own mind and they could not even see how foolish what they were doing actually was. It is so incredible to those studying the Scriptures that it can hardly even be imagined. The one thing that makes it so tangible is the number of times we read of it in Scripture. Those after the flood were only the first, Israel did it in the wilderness after witnessing the plagues. Those after Joshua did it over and over again during the judges. Saul did it, Solomon did it, Jeroboam led the ten tribes into it. Jeremiah and Ezekiel are full of those who were doing it in their day. But for those who are reading this commentary, ponder how it has been repeated again in America in our own day.

THE RISE OF EVOLUTION AND THE FALL OF REASON

That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. 10 Is there a thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been long ago, in the ages which were before us. Ecc 1:9-10

I have purposely not taken any opportunity to apply these verses to our own generation until now. In my own mind the duty of a commentator is two-fold. First and primarily to apply the Scriptures to the times in which they were written and seek to understand them in that setting. Up to this point, this is exactly what has been done, but there is a second duty and that is to make the application for today circumstances. There is little practical value to knowing the Scriptures in their original setting if they are not clearly applied to the times in which we live. What good does it do for anyone to understand the folly of idolatry in the days of Abraham and Paul if we cannot see the dangers of idolatry today? The whole purpose of what is revealed is to protect us.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us make trial of the Lord, as some of them made trial, and perished by the serpents. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer. 11 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. 1 Cor 10:6-11

Idolatry comes in different forms in different generations. Regardless of who the idol or how it is portrayed, it is still idolatry. I charge that the big bang theory for the origins of the universe and the belief that man

evolved from the primordial slime is just the same old tired worn out idolatry reborn and repackaged for today's "sophisticated" scientific mind. Ponder what Paul said about those who knew God and stopped glorifying him as God and stopped giving thanks.

because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Rom 1:21-23

This is exactly what is happening here in our own nation over the past hundred years. America knew God when she was founded. Those who worked hard to create this nation glorified him as God and gave thanks to him. Though there were many foolish and false doctrines being taught among the denominations, all believed in God. Then some scientists stopped glorifying him as God and stopped giving thanks. Soon they became vain in their reasoning as they sought for an alternate explanation for the creation. Now idolatry is back. The universe has created itself and man is self-made and self-created. We have all the trimmings of idolatry without the idol. But the end result is that we have changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the concept of "Nature." It is "Nature" who is responsible for all that is and though they do not worship her, they give her the glory of being the creator. They claim to believe that the universe created itself. That billions of years of combinations have wrought the beauty and symmetry of the universe. That all life is the result of a lightning bolt at sea or some other combination of things occurring by chance. If there is no God, then such reasoning would be clever. But since there is a God, it is the same thing all over again "professing themselves to be wise they became fools." "The have become vain in their reasoning and their senseless heart is darkened." But though they cannot be reached they are still without excuse.

When those living in early civilizations concluded that the stars, the sun, the elements and certain characteristics (such as fertility or war) were gods in themselves, they made images to them, offered them sacrifices, and bowed down to them. They also made the laws and rules for how they would worship them.

Though those living today scoff at such superstition. The only difference in the position of the "enlightened" today and that of those long ago is one point. Today we believe the universe created itself and that man himself is responsible for what he is. Though there are no idols, no worship and homage, what man has done today is no different from what they did in Rome and Greece. They believed that the sun, moon, and stars had power in themselves and could control us. Americans believe they created themselves but hold no further power. They made images and worshiped and served the creature, those living today do not make the images, but they still serve the creature, for today all serve themselves as the highest priority in their lives. Hence though the names have changed, little else has. Those who believe in evolution are self-made, self-taught, and want to be self-governed. Just as idolatry freed one from any need to glorify, honor, and submit to God, so also does evolution. In both systems everyone makes their own rules and under both all need to submit to his authority vanishes.

It is my proposition that what Americans did in the late 1800's to the present is exactly what the Gentiles did in Rom 1:18-23. That which is known of God was ignored and God was no longer glorified or thanked as he had previously been. Man became vain in his reasonings and his senseless heart was darkened. The glory of the incorruptible God was exchanged for the belief that the universe and man created themselves. What proof can I offer to manifest the truth of this? If it is true then all that happened to the Gentiles in Rom 1:24-32 will happen again. What then should be seen in America today if what was done in 1:18-23 is happening today? Male and female homosexuality will rise up (Rom. 1:26-27) and become respectable. The morals of the nation will crawl down into the gutter as men fall into the same reprobate mind and are filled with the same unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness etc. 1:28-32. As you study the remainder of this chapter, compare it carefully to what is going on today in America. Is there enough of a parallel between the two that the same results follow? There is no doubt in my own mind, but decide for yourself.

24. Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness

Because of the above, God gave them up.

"DIO... *wherefore, on which account...*" (Thayer, Joseph Henry, op. cit. p. 152; 1352)

What else could he do? He must either destroy them, or leave them in their circumstances while

he worked out his plan to save as many as could still be saved? This is the exact point Paul will make later in the letter.

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

God had manifested himself clearly to every man through the signs left in the creation, signs that clearly manifest his power and divinity. In spite of all God's efforts men chose rebellion and folly and refused to be thankful or grateful. They created images of their own desire and served them with laws they enjoyed keeping. There was nothing else for God to do, he "gave them up." There is no pleasure in this statement. It probably felt just as it did when he had to give up Israel many years later.

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 Zeboim? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. Hosea 11:1-8

But God could do nothing further with them at that time and in order to proceed with his plan to save others, God "gave them up."

"paradidomi... to give over... 1. prop. to give into the hands (of another. 2. to give over into (one's) power or use... to deliver to one something to keep, use, to deliver one up to custody, to be judged, condemned, punished, scourged, tormented, put to death, (often thus in prof. Auth.)... , take care of, manage... (Thayer, p. 480-481; 3860)

God simply left them to their own devices. He left them to do as they pleased, knowing fully what would happen if he did. This gave others the opportunity to see that God is just and right. That these things cannot simply be left alone or overlooked. Sin and false teaching are like a disease. The longer one has it the worse the symptoms become and the graver the outcome. The spiritual consequences of being left in sin, left to walk one's own road and choose one's own path is much the same as the physical consequences of leaving a disease alone to work in one's body.

But shun profane babblings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness, 17 and their word will eat as doth a gangrene: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; 2 Tim 2:16-17

Paul will now chart the terrible course that false teaching about God's existence leads toward. This is another thing to praise God for. Jesus' death on the cross and the preaching of the gospel is the only power that can avert this terrible end. For once they are simply given over to do as they please, the corruption that is in the world through lust begins to wax stronger and stronger (II Pet 1:4). God "gave them into the hands" and "gave over into the power or use" of "lust."

"epithumia... desire, craving, longing... the desire directed towards... spec. desire for what is forbidden, lust..." (Thayer, p. 238-239; 1939)

Lust describes those strong desires, cravings and longings that man develops toward the things he loves. When these are directed towards things that are wholesome and good, they are a great ally for man to use in mastering difficult tasks.

And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: Luke 22:15

But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better: Phil 1:23

*But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence not in heart, endeavored the more exceedingly to see your face with great **desire**: 1Thes 2:17*

These three passages clearly show that the strong desires God has given to man when properly used and directed bring great good. But as the definition above makes clear, the use man generally makes of his cravings are directed toward what is forbidden. When men are told that something is forbidden and that they are not to cross a certain line, it often makes it more pleasurable and desirable instead of less and they crave it all the more because it is forbidden. When these desires are controlled then one is protected from grave evil, but when he gives himself over to them terrible things begin to occur.

*But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful **lusts**, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1 Tim 6:9-10*

This is what happens with every lust. Paul uses a love for money in First Timothy and sexual desire here in Romans, but it is true of every lust of the flesh. It eats out the heart of those who succumb to it and leads them to “*drown in destruction and sorrow*” and to “*pierce themselves through with many sorrows.*” It leads “unto” uncleanness. This is the term “*eis*” which “*denotes the end to which a thing reaches or extends,*” “*the end by which a thing is completed, i.e. the result or effect.*” This puts God’s laws and God’s judgements into a totally different light. Instead of God’s laws being confining and God’s intervention to stop it being a punishment and retribution (which of course they are) they are also a cleansing and protecting of the race. If God does not intervene and cut off this wickedness it grows as thorns or a cancer and leads to “uncleanness.”

“akatharsia...uncleanness; a. physical... b. in a moral sense, the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living... used of impure motives...” (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 21; 167)

The desire and craving for what is forbidden rapidly decays into the impurity of lustful and profligate living. Such desires decay rapidly from an enjoyable control of a little bit to an insatiable desire leading to complete bondage and mastery. It always begins as the servant of the one who practices it but soon becomes the tyrant and master. Very rapidly one loses their ability to control lusts and simply “enjoy” a little sin. Soon they have no self-control and are being driven by their lusts into areas which even they consider filthy and disgusting. An alcoholic is a perfect example of how all sins affect one in this way. It begins with what “enjoyable and controllable” social drinking. But it becomes an activity in which they become drunk and make a fool of themselves, then something they are compelled to do even when they do not desire it. They become intoxicated at work, at home, while driving. Some are killed while driving, others lose their families and their jobs. They end up in the gutter in filthy clothes, with no self respect and no hope for the future. Finally the alcohol takes a toll on their body and brain and they begin to lose their bodily functions.

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? Who hath complaining? who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? 30 They that tarry long at the wine; They that go to seek out mixed wine. 31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, When it sparkleth in the cup, When it goeth down smoothly: 32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, And stingeth like an adder. 33 Thine eyes shall behold strange things, And thy heart shall utter perverse things. 34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, Or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. 35 They have stricken me, (shalt thou say), and I was not hurt; They have beaten me, and I felt it not: When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again. Prov 23:29-35

All sins are like this. More quickly than one dreams the lust they occasionally indulge themselves in take over and lead ever deeper and deeper. Ultimately dragging them to complete destruction and ruin.

When God gave them up and they chose to allow their own powerful cravings to have free reign without any restraint, God was no longer there to influence and hold them back. He simply gave them up and no longer intervened. In this case, instead of the flood or Sodom and Gomorrah, his punishment was to simply leave them alone and let them have exactly what they wanted. When these people exchanged the glory of God for images of man and beast, their punishment was to

be allowed to go into whatever areas their desires would lead them.

that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves.

These cravings soon drove them to “dishonor” their own bodies publicly.

“atimazo... to make atimos, to dishonor, insult, treat with contumely, whether in word, in deed, or in thought...” (Thayer, p. 83; 818)

“atimos... without honor, unhonored, dishonored... base, of less esteem...” (Thayer p 83; 820)

They used their bodies in ways that disgraced and insulted themselves. Their lusts forced them to actually dishonor and debase it. A look at a man who has gone into the very depths of depravity in any realm reveals this sad truth. There is no greater warning to sinful man than to see the fruits of what sin will cause others to do to their own bodies. Once a craving takes absolute control no one cares any longer what others think about what they are doing. The drunk will lie in his own vomit and excrement in the gutter. The sexual pervert will do unspeakably filthy things with others. The man filled with greed will become a public traitor (Judas). List what you will every despicable and dishonorable thing that anyone has done that has brought dishonor and shame upon themselves started with a lust that led into uncleanness.

25. For that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie

As a relative pronoun, this term sums up those who were just described as a class and often reveals a reason or cause.

“hostis... prop. any one who; l. e. 1. whoever, every one who... whosoever (all those who)... 2. it refers to a single person or thing, but so that regard is had to a general notion or class to which this individual person or thing belongs, and thus it indicates quality: one who, such as one as, of such a nature that... 3. Akin to the last usage is that whereby it serves to give a reason, such as equiv. to seeing that he, inasmuch as he... 4. Acc to a later Greek usage it is put for the interrogative tis in direct questions...” (Thayer, p. 457; 3748)

This is the reason why this came into being, it could also be translated “*seeing that they*” or “*inasmuch as they.*” God was faithful, God never wanted such a terrible thing to occur. These people took the truth they had about God as their Creator and they willingly exchanged that truth for a lie. They had the truth, that which was real and genuine, but they traded it for something they wanted more; They preferred a lie and an illusion to the truth. These people willingly and knowingly exchanged what they knew to be true for a lie. What a powerful indictment against them.

worshiped and served the creature

In a second and similar exchange, they also traded what they chose to “worship” and serve.

“sebazomai... (sebas reverence, awe); 1. to fear, be afraid... 2. to honor religiously, to worship...” (Thayer p 572; 4573)

Instead of giving their reverence, awe and worship to God who actually deserved them, they chose to give it instead to the things God had created.

“ktisis... the act of founding, establishing, building, etc. ... 1. The act of creating, creation... 2. ... creation i.e. thing created... a. Of individual things and beings, a creature, a creation... 3. An institution, ordinance...” (Thayer, p. 363; 2937)

They also “served” the inanimate material creation in ways they devised in their own hearts.

“latreuo... a. to serve for hire;... b. univ. to serve, minister to, either gods or men and used alike of slaves and of freemen; in the N. T. to render religious service or homage, to worship... in the strict sense; to perform sacred services, to offer gifts, to worship God in the observance of the rites instituted for his worship...” (Thayer p 372-373; 3000)

These people offered fear and religious honor to things instead of to God. They served and ministered to them. They gave them the best they had. They gave all of it up to the creature. Since man is the crowning glory of the creation and since everything made is under his dominion, their complete folly is revealed. They gave fear, honor, reverence and submission to beings of lesser

power dignity and honor than themselves. The most amazing thing about this is that they did it knowingly and willingly. They did it because it was the only way they could give in to their cravings. God had forbidden them the right to enjoy their cravings so they exchanged him for imaginary gods who would allow them to do whatever they desired.

rather than the creator who is blessed forever amen

They chose of their own will and volition to serve the creature rather than the Creator. He who created the heaven and the earth and the seas and all the animals and plants was rejected. They rejected the Creator who had manifested his power, might and majesty because they wanted to have their own way and chose instead to serve rocks and trees, stars and sun. They gave up the Creator. They worshiped bulls and goats, they held the sun and stars in awe, they gave gifts to the weather. The sinful folly in such an exchange is so evident that the Spirit simply comments that God giving them up was punishment enough.

Yet he cannot pass up the opportunity to express the truth that God (the one they rejected) is “blessed” forever. He is worthy of praise, honor and glory, worthy of all the adoration and service.

Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created. Rev 4:11

This expresses the terrible injustice they did to God. What he deserved they refused to give him. But they were willing to give it to others. In Hosea, God likens the pain he endures through this to having an unfaithful wife who would give herself to others but would not have anything to do with her own husband who loved and cared for her.

26. For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions

Because man dealt so treacherously with God, God gave them exactly what they deserved. Our own proverb “they made their bed, now let them lie in it” fits the context. Sometimes the worst punishment someone can receive is to “reap what they sowed.”

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life. Gal 6:7-8

At the very least, if this is speaking of what happened after God called Abraham and gave up the Gentiles, he had already sent the flood, and confounded their languages, and they were right back where they had been. This time he called Abraham out of Ur and worked his plan through him and the nation that sprung from him. The Gentiles were then given up. It must have seemed like a real blessing at first. They had thrown off the yoke of God’s demands and could now do whatever they chose. Like Cain before them, they too “*went out from the presence of the Lord,*” only to find a service of a entirely different sort. They became slaves to sin. Instead of the joy and freedom they sought, they found instead that it led “*unto*” vile passions. This was “*the end to which a thing reaches or extends...the result or effect.*” The pleasures of sated lust are only a veneer that lasts for a very short time. Once sin takes the mastery and it is not longer enjoyable. It was empty and degrading to be given up by God and to have sin and Satan work their full fury upon them and the vile “passions” take full control of their lives.

“pathos...1. whatever befalls one, whether it be sad or joyous; spec. a calamity, mishap evil, affliction. 2. a feeling which the mind suffers, an affection of the mind, emotion, passion; passionate desire; used by the Greeks in either a good or a bad sense... In the N.T. in a bad sense, depraved passion; Col 3:5... vile passions Rom 1:26” (Thayer, p. 472; 3806)

Their lusts turned to passions and affections of the mind. That which they were strongly moved to accomplish and which they considered to be important. The passions they felt and the cravings of their imaginations slowly and insidiously led their minds into corruption. Their desires were now “vile.”

“atimia... dishonor, ignominy, disgrace,... in a state of disgrace, used of the unseemliness and offensiveness of a dead body);... base lusts, vile passions, Rom 1:26...” (Thayer p 83; 819)

Placing the alpha-privative before honor, they lost all honor. This of course would be seen by God, but not by those who were enslaved to the lusts. They were now in the grip of passions that led not to God's honor and praise, but to God's contempt. Now they are disgraced creatures. This is a similar term to the one used in verse 21 where it was said that they "*dishonored*" their bodies. Now it is the desires themselves that have become disgraceful, unseemly and offensive. In the sight of God they were now craving disgusting and vile things.

for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature.

God ordained and set in place a natural order of things when as he made this creation. It was not good for man to be alone because God had given him needs and desires which could not be fulfilled alone. He had made Adam with emotional and physical needs which could only be fulfilled by another "*who was meet and suitable.*" By taking Eve from Adam's side, God confirmed his intent of a man and a woman being one flesh, and in marriage they could engage in sexual activity as the "natural" use.

"phusikos... (phusis) natural; i.e. a. produced by nature, inborn,... b. agreeable to nature... c. governed by (the instincts of) nature. .." (Thayer p. 660; 5446)

"phusis... a. the nature of things, the force, laws, order, of nature; as opp. to what is monstrous, abnormal, perverse... that which is contrary to nature's laws, against nature... b. birth, physical origin... c. a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature... d. the sum of innate properties and powers by which one person differs from others, distinctive native peculiarities, natural characteristics..." (Thayer, p. 660; 5449)

It was natural for one important reason, this was how God designed and planned the human race to function. It is natural for a man to have a woman and for a woman to have a man. This is the family God designed with a mother and father and God having created the means by which this couple could procreate children. It was God's intent and thus the natural order that a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and they become one flesh. This is the natural use for all sexual activity.

Worldly man has always found this "natural use" of sexual activity in the marital realm to be too common place and "boring" to generate true passion. Thus men and women commit adultery and fornication and a way to enhance the enticement by seeking the forbidden. They believed that they would find greater enjoyment and fulfillment by rejecting God and God's plan and fulfilling their cravings. This has always been an abomination with God. No one who wishes to serve God can view sex as a recreational activity. The only way to indulge in such cravings is to cast off God by going out of his presence. So they cast off God to indulge in these things. But the Spirit of God now revealed that it did not stop there. Once people God and his order are banished from their minds, their "vile passions" lead them much further than they anticipated. Those who cast off God find that they crave things that are "against nature."

Once an individual or a culture turns their back on God, enticement and enjoyment become the new masters. But the initial enticement and excitement of adultery gradually fades, so new experiences are sought. The familiarity of free sex, regardless of how varied and expansive it becomes will also breed contempt over time. Hence ultimately, the woman will seek new sexual encounters by leaving her natural use as the sexual partner of one man in marriage and instead begin to crave another woman. The Holy Spirit describes a female homosexual relationship, or what our society now refers to as a lesbian relationship.

Though the Spirit uses very delicate terms, he clearly expresses that God does not view this relationship with favor. Although within the culture, women can reach a level of passion that leads them to drift so far from God and his natural order that this can both feel and look normal within the culture.

Even our own culture has reached a level of comfort with these actions that some calling themselves Christians believe Paul was wrong. They seek to reject this verse from the Bible. Our own society argues that this is something they were born with and that since God created them this

way and they cannot help it, it is cruel and wrong to deny them the right to indulge in such feelings.

This is exactly how God depicted the course such people take. They *“became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, . . . Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves:”* Those who argue that male and female homosexuality ought to be viewed as normal and that God’s word should be rejected prove by those very words that their “reasoning is vain” their heart is “senseless and darkened.” That they have “become fools,” and “their bodies are dishonored.” These are strong terms that God has given to them. They are not insults, just statements of fact.

likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman burned in their lust one toward another men with men working unseemliness.

In the exact same manner the men also began to feel “vile passions” toward one another. They left the natural, normal, and good use that God gave at the beginning. The helper suitable to man’s needs was a single woman who would become his wife. Through her he would receive companionship, have his sexual desires met, have a mother for his children and be the father. This was God’s natural order and intent.

But once again, men decided they could get more enjoyment out of women who were not their wives. That the sexual enjoyment would be much greater if he could have a different woman any time he desired. Since God would not allow such activities, they gave God up and served the creature. But after a time, men also became bored with the common place adultery with women and left that natural use of the woman. Not even a different woman any time they desired could sate them. They began to “burn” with lust toward other men.

“ek-kaio... 1. to burn out, 2. to set on fire, pass. to be kindled, to burn,... properly, of fire; metaph. of the fire and glow of the passions (of anger...) of lust...” (Thayer p 195; 1572)

The inner thoughts of a man were kindled into a red hot fire of passion, lust, and craving when the thought of another man entered their mind. How very sad and yet frightening that one human being could become so lost to passion that he could turn his passions on another to such a degree. This is not a natural desire. It is depicted in the N. T. as a corrupt evil thing. Paul uses the word “unseemliness.”

“aschemosune... (aschemon).... unseemliness, an unseemly deed... one’s nakedness, shame...” (Thayer p 82; 808)

“aschemon... a. deformed. b. indecent. unseemly...” (Thayer p 82; 809)

Paul uses a term of corruption and deformity to describe such a deed. It is against nature, it is against what God decreed and set in motion, thus to God it is unseemly, without honor, and disgraceful. There is nothing pure, clean or good about it. It is a completely selfish and evil act. It violates God’s law and came about because they refused to accept the constraints of marriage as God created it, they did not control their evil and corrupt lusts before they became enslaved.

receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due.

God’s wrath was being poured out upon them even as they were engaging in this activities. The fall into homosexuality is God’s recompense for their error which is was due to them. Take a few moments to examine the definitions of these terms before reading the only conclusion that a full knowledge of their meaning can lead to.

“apolambano... 1. To receive (from another...) what is due or promised... 2...to take again or back, to recover... to receive by way of retribution... Rom 1:27... 3. To take from others, take apart or aside... 4. To receive any one hospitably...” (Thayer p 64; 618)

Thus the reception was directly from God by way of retribution. The very falling into this activity is the payment of a penalty from God, it was his way of “recompensing” them for the insults they had heaped upon him by rejecting him as they did.

“antimisthia... a reward given in compensation, requital, recompense; a. in a good sense... b. in a bad sense: Rom 1:27...” (Thayer p 50; 489)

Falling to such a level of lust, was a punishment in itself. A punishment perfecting fitting the crime. When any man or woman believes they can be happy in direct opposition to God’s divine revelation, then the defiling lusts they ultimately believe they need to be happy is God’s recompense for their error in rejecting God. This is the strongest indictment in the Scriptures of the homosexual relationship. The only thing stronger than this is God’s giving it the death penalty through out Jewish history (Lev 20:13).

With this language God here reveals that there is no real happiness in this type of relationship. The very act of seeking happiness through such lust can only bring a just recompense upon those who have sought it. God is not mocked! No matter how deeply it is hidden, there is a sense that one is not what they ought to be, and a realization that God has called this is a perverted desire. One of the greatest indicators of this truth is the militant attitude they hold toward the Scriptures that condemn them and the people who believe it. If it didn’t matter they wouldn’t care what the Scriptures taught, but those Scriptures resonate so they seek to remove them.

The only way to be saved from the unhappiness and emptiness of this lust is to repent of it and leave it. This is why the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Even those dropped to the very depths can find their way back with the awesome and great power of the gospel.

Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, not abusers of themselves with men, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. 1 Cor 6:9-11

28. And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge

Yet these vile passions are only the beginning. Other things also came into being when they left God’s presence. Paul now used another term of comparison, *“even as.”*

“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).

The enormity of their sin is now set out proportionally with the enormity of the penalty that followed. The first member of the comparison is that they “refused” to have God in their knowledge.

“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, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 154; 1381).

They put God to the test and he did not measure up for them. They knew he was God, but they cast him off because after proving and scrutinizing him they did not want him. They decided that God was not for them. It was not ignorance, it was rebellion. They didn’t even want him in their knowledge, they want him totally removed from their minds and never to be brought up again. This is what is placed on one side of the comparison. Since they desired to have nothing to do with God, to that same degree and proportion:

God gave them up unto a reprobate mind-

God gave them exactly what they wanted. While God intervened constantly in the history of the Israelites, helping to keep them pure and faithful to him, continually bringing them back from their choice of rejecting him. He completely gave up Gentiles to whatever they desired. What could these people really make of themselves without God and his laws? He gave them up “unto - *eis* which *“denotes the end to which a thing reaches or extends,” “the end by which a thing is completed, i.e. the result or effect.”* The result of their getting their own way in this was a “reprobate” mind.

“adokimos... not standing the test, not approved; properly of metals and coin,.. hence which does not prove itself to be such as it ought... of sterile soil... in a moral sense [A.V. reprobate],...hence unfit for

something..." (Thayer, p. 12; 96)

Just as they tested him and found him to be wanted, he now tested them and found their minds to be unfit and not such as it ought to be. Their minds could not think or reason properly. That which they put their minds to always ended up distorted and out of harmony with truth and what is right.

With Israel, it was always at this point that God stepped in and brought them back through war, pestilence, or slavery. He never allowed them to go beyond this point because He needed them to bring in all His promises.

But for the rest, when they cast off and rejected God they also cast off and rejected logic and reason. The consequence of this rejection was far greater than these Gentiles dreamed. Once a person casts off the ability to properly reason regarding the natural order of a created universe, and denies the signs which God left to clearly see his existence, he quickly degenerates to a level of reprobation. He can not reason clearly on morality or ethics. He can no longer reason regarding how he ought to treat either God or his fellow man. His entire mind is off balance. His mind can no longer pass the test. It is no longer a mind after God's own. It has marred its image and is like salt that has lost its savor, fit for nothing.

Since it is not in man that walks to direct his own steps, and all of God's commands giving us the old path and the good way are for our good always, if God stops doing what is necessary to keep them hemmed in, where else can they go? When absolute selfishness reigns in every mind and all boundaries of decency and care and concern for others are removed, only chaos and misery can follow.

Our own nation is validating this very point. Only a few generations back did the concept of evolution take hold. Consider the grave consequences to morality and common-sense since then. The courts system now finds it more difficult to decide between what is right and wrong. Abortion is a classic example. Women are now killing their own babies with the help of a doctor and no one sees a problem. This illustrates the truth that once a person loses the ability to reason clearly with respect to God, he loses at the same time the ability to so govern and rule himself that he will be able to be happy. No one who simply moves at the whims of his emotions and lusts will ever be happy. The anger, lust, covetousness, or any other craving that is contrary to what God knows is for our good always will finally destroy him. We must never forget that every law of God is designed for the best interest of man:

And Jehovah commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear Jehovah our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as at this day. 25 And it shall be righteousness unto us, if we observe to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, as he hath commanded us. Deut 6:24-25

When man craves for things that are contrary to these things, He is on a path of self-destruction. Those who have fully walked that path have been absolutely destroyed. The reason for this is very simple. Everything that is good and fitting is lawful and right and incorporated by God into our lives. The only things left are the things that are "not fitting." These are the very things those who reject God are anxious to do. When he gives them up this is what they run to.

to do the things that are not fitting being filled with all

*"kath-eko ... b. "to be meet or proper," in the general sense of *convenire* (English *convenient*) and with various shades of meaning, especially "it is fitting," "it is seemly," "it is necessary," "it is my obligation or duty" (Kittel Vol 3 p. 437-440)*

This is the heading that begins the long list of sinful areas that those who rejected God have entered and been destroyed. God simply labels them as things that are not meet or proper. They are not fitting or seemly. There are things in this world that are uplifting, useful, proper and of good reputation that are summed up under our word convenient. Those who succumb to the cravings of passion, contrary to God's law, find that what they enjoy doing are only "*convenient*" for them but are absolutely "*inconvenient*:" for everyone else. They are not fitting, or proper and carry a bad reputation among decent people. As we see what they are were filled with the corrupt nature of these unbecoming things will become more evident. Thus with a reprobate mind are easily identified

because they “are filled with” the following.

“*pleroo*, ... 1. to make full, to fill, to fill up... to fill to the full... to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally... 2. to render full, i. e. to complete; a. prop. to fill up to the top... so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim,... b. to perfect, consummate... bb. to make complete in every particular; to render perfect... c. to carry into effect, bring to realization, realize; a. of matters of duty, to perform, execute ... bb of sayings, promises, prophecies, to bring to pass, ratify, accomplish; ... hh universally and absolutely, to fulfill, i.e. to cause God’s will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God’s promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfillment ...” (Thayer, p. 517-518; 4137).

They do not simply do them occasionally. These were not moments of weakness that were immediately repented and wept over, as Christians do when they repent, confess, and then completely remove it from the mind. These were things that “filled up” the mind. Those who had succumbed to these cravings were “filled up to the top” with them. Feeling good about such actions both before and in the midst of the lust and after the lust has gone and they have a chance to soberly reflect upon what they had done. They caused them to abound and furnished their fulfillment liberally. Every waking moment was filled with desires that degraded and destroyed them. They went right back to where man went at the time of the flood. Every imagination of the thoughts of their heart were only evil continually.

And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Gen 6:5

The term “all” prefaces the next four terms which are all in the plural. It is a part of the idea of their being filled to the brim with them. Paul was not affirming that every Gentile was filled with all of them always, but that once the Gentiles were taken over by one of them, they continued to grow until they completely filled their mind. They became the new norm.

“*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, ... esp. with nouns designating virtues or vices, emotions, character, condition, to indicate every mode in which such virtue, vice or emotion manifests itself, or any object whatever to which the idea expressed by the noun belongs... c. the whole ... 2. with nouns which have the article, all the, the whole,... with a Plural, all (the totality of the persons of things designated by the noun) 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).

Since these are plural nouns, it means it is “all (the totality of the persons of things designated by the noun).” The totality of unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, and maliciousness.

unrighteousness

This is the same term Paul began this section with (1:18). It is the “*alpha privative*” (opposite and inverse) of righteousness. Since righteousness is the essence of being made in the image and likeness of God (see comments on 1:17 page 26-27). Righteousness is one who is what he ought to be. Fulfilling duties and obligations to both God and our fellow man. A righteous man wants to be fair and just in his dealings with others because it is the natural respect and love that they deserve. He does not take from them what is rightfully theirs. Their time, peace of mind, dignity, honor, possessions, belong to them as ours do to us.

Those who are filled with all unrighteousness care for none of this. They do not care about God or their fellow man. They are so filled with selfishness that their only concern is for their own cravings and desires. The thought that it might harm or destroy another makes absolutely no difference to them. They do not care about God’s feelings, so commit idolatry and they care nothing for their fellow man, and thus care nothing about murder, stealing, adultery etc. They are filled with a total disregard for the rights and needs of others. They will not be restrained by law or justice. They do what is right in their own eyes. They are possess by the “if it feels good do it” mentality.

wickedness

“*poneria*... (*poneros*)... *depravity, iniquity, wickedness* ... [so A.V. almost uniformly] *malice* ... evil purposes and desires...” (Thayer, p. 530; 4189)

“*poneria* means “defectiveness,” also “physical sickness” in both animals and men, ... *poneria* is the “intentionally practiced evil will”... “unceasing baseness” (Kittel Vol 6 p. 562-563)

“*poneros*... 1. *full of labors, annoyances, hardships; a. pressed and harassed by labors; 2. bad, of a bad nature or condition; a. in a physical sense... b. in an ethical sense, evil, wicked, bad, etc. substantively hoi poneroi. the wicked, bad men, ... ho poneros is used pre-eminently of the devil, the evil one...*” (Thayer, p. 530-531; 4190)

God’s verdict on their use in this world is that they are “defective” and “sick.” There is an “unceasing baseness” about their conduct that makes them “of a bad nature.” They are undependable, unreliable and worse can be counted on to act only for themselves and even take pleasure in harming and damaging (malice). To be filled with this they would have the very opposite of “love.” Instead of a desire to do that which is good, wholesome and in the best interests of others, those with a reprobate mind are filled with the desire to injure, destroy and harm.

covetousness-

They want what others have and do not consider this boundary in possessions to be a barrier to them. What others have ought to be theirs and taking them regardless of the pain and sorrow they cause doesn’t matter to them.

“*pleonexia*... (*pleonektes* i.q.) *greedy desire to have more, covetousness, avarice...*”

“*pleonexia, philarguria* Between these words the same distinction exists as between our ‘covetousness’ and ‘avarice’... *pleonexia*, primarily the having more, and then in a secondary and more usual sense, the desire after the having more, is the more active sin, *philarguria* the more passive: the first,.. seeks rather to grasp what it has not; the second, to retain, and, by accumulating, to multiply that which it already has. The first in its methods of acquiring, will be often bold and aggressive; even as it may, and often will, be as free in scattering and squandering, as it was eager and unscrupulous in getting:... *philarguria*, on the other hand, the miser’s sin... will be often cautious and timid, and will not necessarily have cast off the outward shows of uprightness. The Pharisees, for example, were *philarguroi* (Luke 16:14): this was not irreconcilable with the maintenance of a religious profession, which the *pleonexia* would have manifestly been....” (Trench synonyms p 81-84)

The greedy desire to have more is the attitude behind much of the misery and anguish that exists in this world. Those who can make money by cheating, misusing and abusing other people. God condemned the Jews for panting after the dust on the head of the poor (Amos 2:7). The grief caused by those who are filled with a greedy desire for more that does not even ponder the grief it causes others. There is nothing good about this. It is not ambition or a desire to better oneself. It is looking at the things which others have and scheming for ways to get them. It takes whatever it can get and cares nothing for the trouble, death and sorrow it leaves behind.

maliciousness;

“*kakia*... 1. *malignity, malice, ill-will, desire to injure...* 2. *wickedness, depravity...* wickedness that is not ashamed to break the laws,... *evil, trouble* ..KAKIA, PONERIA: associated Rom 1:29... *Kakia* denotes rather the vicious disposition, *poneria* the active exercise of the same.... ” (Thayer, P 320; 2549)

These are people who are like spiders or lions. They live to prey off others. Their hearts are filled with malice and the desire to hurt and injure others. They enjoy it. They enjoy making the lives of others as miserable and uncomfortable as they possible can imagine. They have a vicious disposition that will kill, maim, injure a person while at the same time desiring to loot, destroy or vandalize their property. The basic nature of is that of hatred and disgust for others and a desire to harm if possible.

People who are filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness and maliciousness are the most wicked and dangerous of all. They are the tyrants and mass murderers of history. They

are the ones who will sign the death warrants for millions, torture, loot and destroy. People like this are only found among those who have rejected all that God and His word stand for.

As we summarize these things we see first of all that both their minds and their deeds both failed the test and were unfitting:

Mind (Failed the test or reason - act insanely while sane)

Deeds (not fitting - doing things that were severely inconvenient to others).

This led to four distinct areas of evil and perversion:

- (1) Unrighteousness, (unfair and unjust)
- (2) Wickedness (malignant and hateful deeds),
- (3) Covetousness (wanting what they had no right to have since they belonged to others)
- (4) Maliciousness (the attitude of a lion, spider, serpent, shark) — others must die so they can live).

Because of these twistings and perversions in their mind they were full of:

Emotion/Attitude	Action/Deed	Words
Envy (1)	Murder (2)	Deceit (4)
Malignity (5)	Strife (3)	Whisperers (6)
Hateful to God (8)	Inventors of evil things (12)	Backbiters (7)
Insolent (9)	Disobedient to parents (13)	Boastful (11)
Haughty (10)	Covenant-breakers (15)	
Without understanding (14)		
Without natural affection (16)		
Unmerciful (17)		

The second concludes with an amazing paradox. They have a full knowledge that God had decreed that those who do things like are worthy of death, yet it doesn't stop them. There are two reasons for this. First, they no longer fear or even accept God's existence so though they know that God condemns them they are unmoved because to them there is no God and no fear of God. Second, because of their perverted sense of justice, good and evil, even though they know what the Scriptures say they disagree with their conclusions. Even though it influences them to enjoy it more since it is condemned, they don't really agree that it is wrong and thus they are in the darkness and blinded to the inconsistencies of their own conduct.

Hence even though they know the truth they can do them with pleasure and also consent with them that practice them.

full of

This next term "full" may only apply to envy or may carry at least through the end of this verse. Similar to "pas" it carries the notion of a mind that is filled with such thoughts and emotions. Again, it is not an occasional emotion that is set aside and repented of. The mind is filled with it.

"mestos... full... in reference to persons whose minds are as it were filled with thoughts and emotions either good or bad..." (Thayer, p. 402; 3324)

What follows is the vocabulary of what unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness and maliciousness will bring. We will quickly define them by giving a Greek definition and then a few words to summarize its use in Scripture.

envy,

"phthonos... envy, is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing the advantage or

prosperity of others; this evil sense always attaches to this word..." (Vine vol 2 p 37)

"*phthonos... envy... for envy*, i.e. prompted by envy... doth the Spirit which took up its abode within us (i. e. The Holy Spirit) long *enviously?* ... (Thayer, p. 652; 5355)

When good fortune enters into the life of someone else and it creates feelings of displeasure and unhappiness in our own, we are selfish and pitiful creatures. Most people have felt this emotion under extreme circumstances. Perhaps when good fortune occurs to an enemy or someone we detest. But the Spirit here is not speaking of an occasional thing. He speaks of people whose minds are filled with envy. Whenever anything good happens to anyone else they are very unhappy about it. When one cannot look upon the lives of others without becoming bitter, angry or frustrated at their good fortune then they are in the grips of this emotion.

murder

"*phonos...murder, slaughter...*" (Thayer p 657; 5408)

The taking of human life has always been tied to a respect for our being created in the image and likeness of God.

And surely your blood, (the blood) of your lives, will I require. At the hand of every beast will I require it. And at the hand of man, even at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. 6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. For in the image of God made he man. Gen 9:5-6

Only those who do not respect God's image could be guilty of this. But the reality is that there are many who are capable of this act. They are so selfish and concerned about themselves that the thought that the needs of others for life does not occur to them as being important.

strife

"*eris... contention, strife, wrangling...*" (Thayer, p. 249; 2054)

"*eris... strife, contention is the expression of enmity...*" (Vine vol 4 p. 82)

This is the emotion one generally feels just before they speak words that start an argument or fight. Generally sparked by resentment, anger, frustration or bitterness they make some people belligerent. Others seem to take delight in stirring it up and then walk away leaving others fighting.

A wrathful man stirreth up contention; But he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife. Prov 15:18

The beginning of strife is (as) when one letteth out water: Therefore leave off contention, before there is quarrelling. Prov 17:14

For lack of wood the fire goeth out; And where there is no whisperer, contention ceaseth. 21 (As) coals are to hot embers, and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to inflame strife. Prov 26:20-21

deceit,

"*dolos...* (fr *delo* to catch with a bait... prop. *bait...* a lure, snare; hence *craft, deceit, guile...*" (Thayer, p. 155; 1388)

This is someone who cannot be trusted. They are never honest and always scheming. This term originally was used of the fisherman who took the time and effort to deceive by creating "bait for a fish." There are some who enjoy doing this to other people. This is the attempt to take advantage of others without their knowledge. A con artist.

malignity

"*kakoetheia...Bad character, depravity of heart and life... used of malignant subtlety, malicious craftiness...*" (Thayer p 320; 2550)

Those who find only the worst in anything, and who put the worst possible construction upon every act. Ascribing to the best deed the wrong motive, and never trusting anyone. This is the malignant subtlety the serpent used to bring about the destruction of Eve. It is the malicious craftiness that

creates situations where others can be harmed.

whisperers,

“psithuristes... (see the preced. word)... a whisperer, secret slanderer detractor...” (Thayer p 676-677; 5588)

“psithurismos... to whisper, speak into one’s ear... a whispering, i.e. secret slandering...” (Thayer p 676; 5587)

Those who secretly destroy the good name and reputation of others by saying bad things about them whether they are true or not. One who travels from place to place in order to carry tales to others. These tales ruin the reputation and relationship with the individuals they deal with but those carrying such tales have no care for it, they relish the feeling of power they hold in being able to tell people what they know.

A perverse man scattereth abroad strife; And a whisperer separateth chief friends. Prov 16:28

31. Backbiters

“katalalos...a defamer, an evil speaker...” (Thayer p 332; 2637)

One who talks others down. One who takes pleasure when something bad happens because they know it will make a juicy bit of information for them to pass along to all their friends. One who likes to find fault and then proclaim it. These are the ones who need to bridle their tongue. Our own “if you can’t think of anything nice to say, don’t say anything.

If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man’s religion is vain. Jas 1:26

hateful to God, / haters of God

“theostuges... (theos and stugeo...) hateful to God, exceptionally impious and wicked...” (Thayer p 288; 2319)

There is a craving in the minds of some people that they would actually like to do God harm if they could. They hate him and all that he stands for (including his people). They actually feel animosity and anger toward him. These are the ones Jesus described:

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you. Matt 7:6

They are the true children of the devil, whose every action manifests the same contempt and hatred of God.

insolent,

“hubristes... (hubrizo) an insolent man, `one who, uplifted with pride, either heaps insulting language upon others, or does some shameful act of wrong’...” (Thayer, p. 633-634; 5197)

“hubrizo... 1. intrans. to be insolent; to behave insolently, wantonly outrageously. 2. trans to act insolently and shamefully towards one... to treat shamefully...” (Thayer, p. 633; 5195)

“hubris, hubrizo, enubrizo, hubristes... With both noun and verb the range of meaning is very large. The noun means originally an act which invades the sphere of another to his hurt, a “trespass,” a “transgression” of the true norm in violation of divine and human right. Arrogance of disposition is often implies... The ref. is to a wicked act, also insult, scorn, contempt, often accompanied by violence, rape, and mistreatment of all kinds. hubristes derived from the verb, denotes a man who, sinfully overestimating his own powers and exaggerating his own claims, is insolent in word and deed in relation to gods and men. (Kittel, TDWNT Vol 8, p. 295-307)

Paul used this very term to describe himself before he became a Christian.

*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

This is an attitude of superiority that causes them to set aside all care and concern for the rights and needs of others. They are insulting and insolent in the way they deal with others. We have a new term on our own culture to describe this "narcissism." These are people with so much pride and contempt for others that it never enters their minds that these people have wants and needs just like theirs do. Instead of being moved with compassion and sympathy, their apathy leads them to only see themselves.

haughty,

"huperephanos... 1. showing oneself above others, overtopping, conspicuous above others, pre-eminent,... 2. especially in a bad sense, with an overweening estimate of one's means or merits, despising others or even treating them with contempt, haughty..." (Thayer, p. 641; 5244)

The attitude of superiority and arrogance that leads to treating others with contempt or even despising them as being unfit to even life. There are people who believe they are so much better than everyone else that they can barely tolerate them. They condescend to be around others, but believe that they owe others nothing and that nothing should be expected anything from him. Such people do not care who they step on to get what they want.

boastful,

"alazon... an empty pretender, a boaster..." (Thayer p 25; 213)

This term differs from the above in that all the focus is within. They simply feel that they are great or they want others to feel that they are great so they either boast believing it to be true or they boast knowing it is not.

inventors of evil things,

"epheuretes... an inventor, contriver..." (Thayer p 265)

"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)

One who lies on his bed in the evening and meditates on new ways to practice evil. Those who grow bored with old ways of sinning and seek out new ways to destroy others or new ways to fulfill the cravings of their lustful heart. Their mind delves ever deeper into way to put forth or be involved in that which is base, wrong and wicked. That which is destructive and injurious. This is best understood by the ways in which the movie industry continually seeks to broaden out the horror of violence and put it on the screen. There are people who sit around thinking of more vile ways to picture someone being killed. Then there are those who go out and practice them.

disobedient to parents

"goneus... a begetter, parent..." (Thayer p 120; 1118)

"apeitheis...impersuasible, uncompliant, contumacious..." (Thayer p 55; 545)

God views this as a grave sin. Respect for parental authority is the foundation for an ordered and civilized society. When neither their love for nor their gratitude toward their parents leads them to submission, children are selfish and unruly. They simply refuse to comply with what their parents desire. What a curse both to the parents and to the nation whose authority they will also despise. They refuse to bend their will to their parents desires. There is no respect, no love, and no obedience. God wanted such stoned when he was leading the people.

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, that will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and, though they chasten him, will not hearken unto them; 19 then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; 20 and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. 21 And all the men of his city shall stone him to death with

stones: so shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee; and all Israel shall hear, and fear. Deut 21:18-21

31. Without understanding-

“*aunetos... unintelligent, without understanding, . . . stupid...*” (Thayer p 82)

This is the same term found in Rom 1:21 and translated “senseless.” Some people cannot be made to see reason. They are going to practice evil and wickedness and when an attempt is made to show them the folly of that course, they do not wish to understand and therefore cannot be made to see the truth.

covenant breakers

“*asunthetos... 2. (suntithemai to covenant), covenant-breaking, faithless...*” Thayer p 82; 802)

God cannot lie, and those who are still in his image and likeness cannot either. But this is a further extension of that. This is the actual making of a covenant or sworn agreement and then later breaking it.

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto. Gal 3:15

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; Heb 6:16-17

This is not only bearing false witness, when they proclaim they have entered into a covenant when they have no intention of keeping it, but the act of breaking it is also a sin.

without natural affection

“*astorgos... (storge love of kindred), without natural affection ...*” (Thayer p 88; 794)

This word is the “*alpha-privative*” of family love. It is the exact opposite of what ought to be found in a family relationship. The husband/wife and parent/ child relationship naturally brings about feelings of love, tenderness and closeness. Yet one can lose these natural feelings of affection. They can descend so low where they no longer feel affection toward mothers and fathers. Such a terrible loss leads to child abuse, both sexual and violent. It also leads to abortion.

unmerciful:

“*aneleemon... (A priv. and eleemon), without mercy, merciless...*” (Thayer p 44; 415)

Another “*alpha-privative*”, this is one who feels no feelings of pity and no desire to help any one regardless of how bad the conditions are that they are forced to live in. When they see others in a dire situation they see no reason to get involved in it. They are unsympathetic and uncaring. Who would want to live in such a society? Truly the gospel has had more influencing power over nations than anyone can realize. These are the fruits of a society that leaves God and his ways behind. Imagine living in such a world with people full of such things. It must have been a difficult and empty life.

32 who knowing the ordinance of God, that they who practice such things are worthy of death,

Once again we have the difficulty of not knowing exactly who the Spirit is referring to here. The most likely possibility is that of those living after the flood which led to the call of Abraham. They were guilty of all these things, but they knew better. These are the same ones who knew God and did not glorify him as God. Who exchanged the truth of God for a lie. They “knew” the ordinances of God.

“*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...*” (Thayer, Joseph Henry, op. cit., p 237; 1921)

This is not the term of casual acquaintance. This is a thorough knowledge, the practical knowledge of one who has actually lived under it. They had to know of these things or they would not have rejected God to do them. They knew thoroughly and accurately the “ordinances” of God.

“dikaioma... 1. that which has been deemed right so as to have the force of law; a. what has been established and ordained by law, an ordinance: univ. of an appointment of God having the force of law, Rom. 1:32... plural used of the divine precepts of the Mosaic law...” (Thayer, p. 151; 1345)

The people under consideration here knew what God had established and ordained by law. They knew thoroughly that those who “practiced” the things listed above were worthy of death.

“prasso...to do, practice, effect... 1. to exercise, practice, be busy with, carry on... used of performing the duties of an office... to undertake to do... 2. to accomplish, to perform... of unworthy acts, to commit, perpetrate... 3. to manage public affairs, transact public business...” (Thayer, p. 535; 4238)

They thoroughly understood the things and they knew that those who acted on such cravings and desires who put them into effect and were busy carrying on with them were “worthy” of death.

“axios, ... a. weighing, having weight; having the weight of (weighing as much as) another thing, of like value, worth as much:... b. befitting, congruous, corresponding... c. of one who has merited anything, worthy-- both in a good reference and a bad...” (Thayer, p. 52-53; 514)

“axios properly, “bringing up the other beam of the scales,” “bringing into equilibrium,” and therefore “equivalent”... The use of axios... shows that two distinct magnitudes are equal or equivalent...” (Kittel, TDTNT, Vol 1; p. 379-380)

They had the idea of the balancing scales vividly in their minds and they knew that when one did the things listed on the one side (1:18-31) they brought up the other beam of the scale in which was death. These were capital crimes, crimes that would separate from one God. They knew these things. This is why it seems best to understand this portion of the Scripture as a direct indictment against first generation apostates. This would also be true of all Jews and Christians who fall away!

not only do the same, but also consent with them that practice them.

Their knowledge of what God felt about and what the penalty for their actions would bring did not move them in the least. There are two indictments here. The first is that they “do” the same.

“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 ...” (Thayer, p. 524-527; 4160)

They carry out, execute, perform and accomplish them. They are involved in things they know to be wrong. There is no fear of God. They know that what they do will bring about their death, but it doesn't stop them from practicing such things. The second indictment is that they “consent” with those who practice them.

“suneudokeo... a. to be pleased together with, to approve together (with others)... absol. (yet so that the thing giving pleasure is evident from the context... b. to be pleased at the same time with, consent, agree to, ... “ (Thayer, p. 604; 4909)

They are pleased with and take enjoyment and pleasure out of it. This is the problem with all sinful acts in entertainment. We cannot watch others sin without leaving in disgust (like Lot - 2Pet. 2:7-8) or taking pleasure in the activity. We only deceive ourselves if we stay. The term for practice here is “prasso...to do, practice, effect...” when others are doing and practicing that which God condemns as worthy of death and we consent to it, we are no better than those who do it.

Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day; 18 For surely there is a hereafter, And your hope will not be cut off. Pr. 23:17-18

Do not be envious of evil men, Nor desire to be with them; 2 For their heart devises violence, And their lips talk of troublemaking. Prov 24:1-2

Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the wicked; 20 For there will be no prospect for the evil man; The lamp of the wicked will be put out. Prov 24:19-20

An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous, And he who is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked. Prov 29:27

As in water face reflects face, So a man's heart reveals the man. Prov 27:19

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him. Pr. 26:12

Chapter Two

1 Wherefore

Even though our translators placed a chapter break between the thoughts of 1:32 and 2:1, the Spirit chose a transition term that allows no break in thought. The things set forth in the previous chapter are here summed up and must be understood as the basis for what is now said. We have many conjunctions in English to accomplish such a transition. We use “and” to join things of equal force, “but” to join things that are adversative, “or” to things that we must choose between, and “therefore” “wherefore” or “because” when we want to join things in some logical relationship. The Greeks also used conjunctions. The Spirit here chose:

“dio... wherefore, on which account...” (Thayer, p. 152; 1352)

With this term, Paul builds a bridge back to all that has just been said. On the account or reason for what has just been said, something now follows. What exactly has just been said? How far back does God want us to take this “wherefore?”? Ponder the brief summary of the previous chapter.

In his introductory comments (1:1-15), Paul has introduced himself as the apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles (1:1-7), expressed his gratitude for all that the church in Rome has done (their faith is proclaimed through the whole world (1:8), and expressed that he prayed unceasingly for them asking God to allow him to come (1:9-10). He revealed that he longed to see them both to establish them by giving them spiritual gifts and to enjoy the comfort of others faith (1:11-12). He then told them he had tried to come many times and been hindered, but now deeply feeling his obligation, is prepared to come to Rome (1:13-15).

In the discussion of the theme of the book (1:16-17), Paul stated that he felt no shame for the gospel because he knew it was God’s power to save all who believed (both Jew and Greek). In it God had revealed the means of restoring His righteousness to sinful man. This could now be accomplished by means of their faith. In fact, the very reason God was now revealing this through the gospel was so that all would be motivated to believe. Even from the days of Habakkuk God had revealed that the righteous would live by faith.

In the final words of the first chapter Paul explained that God’s wrath had been revealed from heaven against all the ungodly and unrighteous conduct of those men who hinder the truth (1:18). All could have known God better than they did, no matter how little they actually knew and none would be excused since the invisible things have always been available for everyone to ponder since the very beginning of the creation in the things that are made. There is no valid excuse for anyone to withhold belief. Only those who hinder the truth remain an unbeliever (1:18-20)!

The greatest condemnation though is given to the multitudes of first generation apostates, who actually knew God, but refused to glorify him or give thanks and soon thereafter became vain in their reasoning and darkened in their hearts (1:21)! Such people thought themselves to be wise but really became fools and willingly exchanged their knowledge of God for idolatry (1:22-25). All first generation apostates from God who fall into vile passions have only themselves to blame. They will find no sympathy from God for the terrible things they encounter (1:26-27). Everyone who refuses to have God in their knowledge ends with a reprobate mind and falls into one or more of the defiling and destroying lusts listed (1:28-32).

This is what the word “wherefore” is summing up, because of these things

thou art without excuse O man, whosoever thou art that judgest

Once again we must keep clearly in mind where this section is leading. His conclusion in 3:23 is that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. He has shown the need of all fallen apostates among both the Jews and the Gentiles to obey the gospel if they are to become righteous. These are the worst of mankind who willingly turned their back upon God. But not everyone does this. There are other classes of mankind who do not fall in this manner. The Spirit selects a single man to describe another class of humanity. Wherever the gospel is preached there will be such men. They are described here in hope that they will be able to identify themselves, and that Christians will be able to identify them. They are those who:

1 Judge others and (by implication) have decided that they are of a higher moral and ethical class than

those described in the first chapter (first generation apostates (from both Jewish and Gentile origin) and all their descendants who have not returned to God (2:1).

- 2 Know that the judgment of God is according to truth against all who practice the things listed in chapter one (2:2).
- 3 Judge them that practice such things, and yet are doing exactly the same things (2:3).

From this description, it is clear that Paul is speaking of all who feel that they have a knowledge of God and are morally superior to all the first generation apostates and their offspring described in the previous chapter. They are those who believe in God, believe that his moral standards are right and agree with the condemnation of those who do not keep God's moral code. They even pass judgment on those who violate God's law and believe such people are worthy of death.

Many who study this section believe that Paul was only speaking to the Jews, even here at the beginning of the chapter. That only God's chosen people could have the knowledge to feel morally superior to others. Sadly however this is not the case. There were also Greeks and Romans who considered the depravity of others to be disgusting, just as there are such people today. For this reason I believe Paul speaks to all men who feel they are morally superior to others yet do not feel a need to obey the gospel. Later, he will deal specifically with the Jews as those who:

- 1 Bear the name of a Jew, and rest upon the law, and glory in God 2:17
- 2 Know his will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law 2:18
- 3 Are confident they are a guide of the blind, a light of them in darkness 2:19
- 4 A corrector of the foolish, teacher of babes, having in the law the form of knowledge and the truth 2:20

That the Jews are included in this first section is obvious. But we will consider the first part of the chapter as an indictment of all morally superior human beings and the latter part of the chapter to specifically deal with the Jews.

There are many men whose high moral standards cause them to detest those who allow their weaknesses to lead them into corruption. They would applaud Paul for his strong rebuke of the wicked. They would appreciate his courage in standing up to give the wicked the condemnation they deserve. The problem, the Spirit points out though, is that there is hypocrisy in the hearts of all who judge others in this way. All who have high enough moral standards to condemn others for evil, have enough knowledge to see that they too are condemned.

thou art without excuse O man,

Paul repeats the word used to describe those in the first chapter with exactly the same intent.

*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:** 21 because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Rom. 1:20-21*

Just as all first generation apostates and their descendants are guilty for their circumstances and cannot use ignorance as an excuse, so too those who agree with Paul yet have not obeyed the gospel are also "without excuse."

"anapologetos,... without defense or excuse Rom 1:20, also that cannot be defended, inexcusable..."
(Thayer p 41; 379)

There is no way that anyone reading and agreeing with the earlier teachings of the book can escape God's wrath if they do not obey the gospel! Their agreement that those who practice such things are worthy of death leaves them without any valid excuse for their own disobedience. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes it! Everyone needs the gospel. Every single person who has passed the age of reason and accountability and entered into mature adulthood is without excuse. Those in ignorance because it is wilful ignorance and those who know

because they know! Those who do not know (1:19-21) are without excuse because the evidence of God is all around them and they refuse to act on it. Those who judge others are without excuse because in condemning others they are condemning themselves.

whosoever thou art that judgest

The term “whosoever” is one of the reasons why I have concluded that this is not speaking only of the Jews. It is the term “*pas - all who, of every class or kind.*” Every single individual who “judges” others is without excuse for it.

“krino... 1. to separate, put asunder; to pick out, select, choose... 2. to approve, esteem... 3. to be of opinion, deem, think... 4. to determine, resolve, decree... 5. to judge; a. to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong... Pass. to be judged, i.e. summoned to trial that one's case may be examined and judgment passed upon it,... b. to pronounce judgment; to subject to censure; of those who act the part of judges or arbiters in the matters of common life, or pass judgment on the deeds and words of others... ” (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 361-362; 2919)

The Spirit used this term to describe those who have “*an opinion concerning right and wrong,*” and “*pronounce judgment*” and “*subject to censure*” those who do not measure up to that standard. In and of itself this is not wrong. When people break God's law it is right to have an opinion about what is right and what is wrong. It is right to know “*the ordinance of God, that they that practice such things are worthy of death*” (Rom 1:32). It is right to call good and evil what they are. It is right even to be vexed as Lot was at the ungodly conduct of the wicked. God Himself pronounces a woe on those who can't tell the difference.

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! 21 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Isa. 5:20-21

The problem is not in the assessment of good and evil, but in the passing of judgement on others without also judging oneself.

for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself;

The Spirit again used “*gar* as a “*particle of affirmation and conclusion.*” “*By the use of this particle, either the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added. . . or some previous declaration is explained.*” “*It adduces the cause or gives the reason of a preceding statement.*” In this case, he now explains why those who judge the conduct of others based upon the word of God and find it to be condemned are without excuse if they do not obey the gospel themselves. The term “wherein” is actually two words, “*en- in the interior of some whole; within the limits of some space.*” and “*hos:*”

“hos... .. II a relative pronoun who, which, what; 9. Joined to a preposition it forms a periphrasis for a conjunction... II Th. 2:10; for which reason, wherefore... ” (Thayer, p. 454-456; 3739)

This could also have been translated “*in the interior of which*” or “*in the midst of which.*” The Spirit warned all who judge others that in that very act they place themselves into the interior or midst of condemning themselves. If we draw a circle and label it sinners then say within ourselves that everyone in that circle is condemned, we too are in the midst of that circle. No one can “*pronounce judgment on*” others without “*condemning*” themselves.

“kata-krino... to give judgment against... to judge worthy of punishment, to condemn...” (Thayer p 332; 2632)

Those who see in the conduct of others that which violates God's law “*give judgment against*” and “*judge*” themselves “*worthy of punishment.*” The reason for this is similar to that offered in 1:20. There they could have no excuse for their ignorance because the things that are made were all around them and what could be known of God (his everlasting power and divinity) had been manifested to them. Here, it is exactly the same. Because they were using God's ordinances to pass judgment on others, they were acknowledging that not only did they know those ordinances, but they agreed with them. This is exactly the same way Paul concluded the previous chapter. They too knew the ordinances of God that “*those who practice such things are worthy of death.*” They

were giving their own commitment to the justice of those laws, by using them to judge others. This would be wonderful if they were keeping it themselves. But they were not.

for thou that judgest dost practice the same things.

Again “*gar*” gives “*the reason and cause of a foregoing statement.*” They will be condemned because while they are judging and condemning the activities of others they are “*practicing*” the same things.

“*prasso ... to do, practice, effect... 1. to exercise, practice, be busy with, carry on... used of performing the duties of an office... to undertake to do... 2. to accomplish, to perform... of unworthy acts, to commit, perpetrate... 3. to manage public affairs, transact public business,...*” (Thayer, p. 535; 4238)

The implications of this are very important. First, when judgment is passed on the activities of others, the one passing judgment admits that the activity is wrong and should be punished. If they are doing the same thing, then one of two things must naturally follow. Either in the act of condemning others they would see their own wicked conduct and repent, or they will become a hypocrite by justifying in themselves what they rebuke and revile in others. Second, the Spirit of God now passes a universal condemnation. **Everyone** who condemns others practices the same thing. In Chapter Three this will be expressed more forcefully made by revealing that all have sinned, that no one has kept the law perfectly.

In summary, the Spirit condemned all who live in ignorance of God and his law in Chapter One, and now in this verse, condemns all who live with a knowledge of God and his law and yet have not obeyed the gospel. All who agree with Paul’s conclusion in 1:32, must obey the gospel or be condemned. Since everyone practices the things listed in 1:28-31, to some degree, all need the gospel. What simplicity and clarity! It doesn’t matter who you are, if you don’t know you should, and if you do know then you must act on that knowledge or stand condemned because instead of applying the standard to your own conduct, you choose to condemn others.

2. We know the judgment of God is according to truth against them that practice such things

Paul now places himself into the group who recognizes and acknowledges that it is right for God to condemn all who have done the things recorded in 1:18-32. In doing this the Spirit showed that it is never wrong to agree with God’s judgment and condemnation of the wicked acts he despises. Paul now introduces another term for “knowledge.”

“*oida,...* 1. like the Lat. *novi* it has the signification of a present *to know, understand*; and in the plpf. the signif. of an impf. 1. *to know,...* 2. *to know* I. e. *get knowledge of, understand, perceive*; a. any fact... b. the force and meaning of something that has definite meaning:... c. as in class. Grk., foll. by an inf. in the sense of *to know how* (Lat. *calleo, to be skilled in ...Phil 4:12*)...” (Thayer, p. 174; 1492).

Those who feel the justice of God’s condemnation of the things listed in Chapter One “*understand*” and “*perceive*” that God judges only on the basis of truth. Though we only have one word for judgment, the Greeks had several and Paul introduces another.

“*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)

We know full well that God’s “*judgement - condemnation of wrong*” which leads to a “*condemnatory sentence*” and “*penal judgment*” is “according to” truth.

“*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...*” p. 328; 2596)

This term works very much like an equal sign does in arithmetic. Whenever an “=” is placed

between two sides of an equation, everyone knows both sides are the same. “Kata” is a verbal equal sign. It does exactly the same thing in a sentence that “=” does in an equation. Most of the “according to’s” in the Scriptures are this term, and describe things that have equal proportion, equal measure or an equal relationship. God’s judgments and condemnation of actions is of equal proportion with the truth. His condemnation of wrong is “according to” the “standard” of truth. There is no prejudice, and no mitigating circumstances with God. When he condemns those who practice such things, he will not be looking at the degree of violation or the background of the one who practiced. He will only look at what one practiced (*prasso - to accomplish/ perform*). Those who perform or accomplish any of the things listed above will be condemned. If we concur with this, we recognize both its reality and propriety.

3. Reckonest thou this O man that judgest them that practice such things and doest the same that you shalt escape the judgment of God?

Paul now asks some very important questions of those who read Chapter One and felt righteous indignation, but saw no need to do anything themselves. All who judge (*pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong*) and yet do exactly the same things they condemn in others are doing one of three things and now must choose between them. Either they:

- 1 Reckon they can escape what God has punished others for doing
- 2 They despise God’s goodness because they do not take advantage of the opportunity to repent,
- 3 They did not know that God’s goodness that gave such a comfortable life was designed to lead to repentance.
- 4 They are actually trying to store up as much wrath as they can on the day of judgment.

All who have not obeyed the gospel and are morally upright must face these issues either now or at the judgment. The term “reckon” is a term for precise mathematics or other forms of logical thinking.

“logizomai... [a favorite word with the apostle Paul, being used (exclusive of quotations) some 27 times in his Epp., and only four times in the rest of the N.T.]. 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)

This is the term a bookkeeper, engineer, or architect would use to describe the calculations that were made to draw their conclusions. So it is in the Scriptures regarding the logical truths that are revealed and needed to be added up or calculated to draw a conclusion. Those who have not yet obeyed to gospel and find themselves feeling moral superiority as portrayed in 2:1 are here asked to ponder this question.

Is this your reasoning? Is this how you add it up? When you take all the facts and calculate their full import what conclusion do you draw? Do you really believe when you condemn others for their practices, and applaud God when he punishes them, while doing exactly the same thing that you are going to “escape?”

“ekpheugo... to flee out of, flee away; a. to seek safety in flight... b. to escape...” (Thayer, p. 200-201).

Do you think you can run fast enough to get away, or that you are mentally quick enough to talk him out of it? Do you think you can seek safety in flight? Do you honestly think you can get away with it? When one condemns in others what they practice how can they possibly escape the same condemnation? What excuse could they offer to God when they have already condemned it in others?

4. Or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering:

If you don’t think the previous question is the appropriate one for you, then perhaps there is another option. Perhaps your reckoning and calculating has led in a different direction. This is the import

of the term “or.”

“ἢ - ε, a disjunctive conjunction... Used 1. to distinguish things or thoughts which either mutually exclude each other, or one of which can take the place of the other...” (Thayer, P. 275; 2228)

The charge has been leveled: “You condemn in others what you practice yourself.” There are only a few reasons for doing such a thing. Either you reckon (calculate and take into account) that God will not condemn you for the things you condemn in others and you will escape judgment, or (*taking the place of the other*), you actually “*despise*” God’s goodness.

kataphroneo, lit., “to think down upon or against anyone” (*kata*, “down,” *phren*, “the mind”) , hence signifies “to think slightly of, to despise,” Vine’s Vol 1, p. 301 2706)

“*kata-phroneo... to contemn, despise, disdain, think little or nothing of...*” (Thayer p 338; 2706)

This alternative is certainly no better than the previous one, but there are only limited reasons and none are good! Those who hold a morally superior attitude toward sinners and yet feel no need to obey the gospel have no hope either. They cannot escape God’s judgment, and the fact that they did not avail themselves of his grace when they realized they too were condemned can only mean that they actually look down upon and think little or nothing of the wonderful gift of God’s goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering. If you do not obey the gospel which one will you choose? The only thing that keeps sinners from their fate at death are these three wonderful attributes which give men the time and the opportunity to come to repentance.

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. 2Pet. 3:9

Those who do not take advantage of this opportunity are setting it at nought and thinking too little of it. To fully convey the value of these three attributes that these people were not taking advantage of, Paul used a term generally used to describe an amount of money or the extent of possessions men hold.

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

There is a great abundance and plenitude to God’s goodness, forbearance and longsuffering, both in the fullness in which they abound in God’s heart and in their value to wicked sinners to whom they are extended. God’s “goodness” is a very pleasant thing to meditate upon.

“*chrestos... 1. prop. fit for use, useful; virtuous, good... 2. manageable, i.e. mild, pleasant, (opp. to harsh, hard, sharp, bitter)... of persons, kind, benevolent...*” (Thayer p 671)

“*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, TDWNT Vol 9 p. 489-492*

Most children assess their parents seeking for this quality. When they find it, that is the person they will seek out when they are in need or have a problem that needs a mild response. Since man’s sin and rebellion in the garden, God has been mild and pleasant to the insults and evil man has heaped upon him. With his great power and ability to destroy, he has shown an attitude of graciousness, kindness and friendliness toward these sinners. Jesus’ cry on the cross: “*Father forgive them for they know not what they do*” is an example of this goodness. This becomes even more evident when we compare it to how he has treated others when that goodness was not offered or was despised for so long that it was removed.

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; 2Pet. 2:4-6

No one dare set at nought or look down upon God's goodness. He will some day be "harsh, hard, sharp and bitter."

For the time being while he waits patiently for as many as possible to come to repentance, he is mild, kind and pleasant. These are temporary. Let no one set them at nought. Added to this is God's "forbearance."

"*anoche*... toleration, forbearance; in this sense only in Rom 2:4; 3:26. (In Grk writ. a holding back, delaying, fr *anecho* to hold back, hinder)... " (Thayer p 49; 463)

"*anecho*... in the N. T. only in the Middle *anechomai*... *to hold up*... hence in middle *to hold one's self erect and firm* (against any person or thing), *to sustain, bear* (with equanimity), *to bear with, endure*..." (Thayer, p. 44-45; 430)

anoche ... (*anecho*) a holding back, stopping, esp. of hostilities: pl., like Lat. *induciae*, an armistice, truce, II. *anechomai* forbearance, ...: (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon NT: 463.)

This is a word that strikes terror in the hearts of those who fully comprehend it. The attitude we see now is only temporary. Since the garden of Eden, God has tolerated and held himself back. He has borne and endured the insults, arrogance and rebellious stubbornness of wicked men. Those who turn to him will be forgiven. For those who set this forbearance at nought, God has already revealed their fate.

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 1:14-15

God's forbearance is not something to hold lightly or to consider as something to be taken for granted. It is precious and needs to be used to prepare for the time when it is removed. The final term "longsuffering" is also a precious attribute in the heart of God that keeps our lives blessed even when we do not deserve it.

"*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, not to lose heart*; hence 1. *to persevere patiently and bravely... in enduring misfortunes and troubles*... 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)

God is patient and slow in avenging wrongs. He possess self-restraint and does not hastily retaliate for the wrongs he has suffered. He is mild and slow in avenging. Peter's use of this term to describe the conditions during the days of Noah perfectly illustrates its use here.

That afore time 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: 1Pet. 3:20

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. 2Pet. 3:9

God was grieved and sorry he had made man. He determined to destroy all men and begin again with Noah and his family. While the ark was being prepared, God possessed the self-restraint and slowness in avenging wrongs which allowed Noah the opportunity to build the ark. While it was being built those living in that day despised God's goodness, forbearance and longsuffering. They could have returned to him, they could have entered into the ark, but they chose not to do so. Very possibly there were men even in the time of Noah who felt as Paul here describes. They condemned others, but did not chose to do anything about what they themselves were doing. When Noah entered the ark, God suspended his goodness, forbearance and longsuffering and gave them exactly what they deserved when he took them all away.

And as (were) the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. 38 For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the

day that Noah entered into the ark, 39 and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Mt. 24:37-39

Those who applaud God for revealing his wrath to others for their conduct and yet practice the same things must realize that they are also included. All who sin will stand before him, and only those who have obeyed the gospel will be saved. He offers one final option.

not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.

Could it be that you too (like the Gentiles in Chapter One) are only ignorant? Is it possible that you just don't realize that this precious time given by God has been offered as an opportunity to repent. Perhaps you simply have not considered or realized its true purpose. God has been good, mild, pleasant, kind and benevolent for one purpose. Perhaps you just did not "know."

"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)

You simply had not put this all together yet. You did not know and understand that the purpose for God's goodness was to "lead" you to repentance.

"ago... to drive, lead. 1. properly... a. to lead by laying hold of, and in this way to bring to the point of destination: of an animal... b. to lead by accompanying to (into) any place...c. to lead with one's self, ... d. to conduct, bring... e. to lead away, to a court of justice, magistrate... 2. tropically; a. to lead, guide, direct... b. to lead through, conduct, to something, become the author of good or of evil to someone... c. to move, impel, of forces and influences affecting the mind... 3. to pass a day, keep or celebrate a feast, etc. ... 4. intrans. to go, depart..." (Thayer, p. 9-10; 71).

God's goodness is designed to "move and impel" it is one of the "forces and influences affecting the mind." If one allows it, this goodness will "conduct, bring, lead guide and direct" someone to "repentance."

"metanoia... [metanoeo] a change of mind: as it appears in one who repents of a purpose he has formed or of something he has done,... esp. the change of mind of those who have begun to abhor their errors and misdeeds, and have determined to enter upon a better course of life, so that it embraces both a recognition of sin and sorrow for it and hearty amendment, the tokens and effects of which are good deeds." (Thayer, Joseph Henry, op. cit., p. 405-406).

"metanoeo ... to change one's mind, i.e. to repent (to feel sorry that one has done this or that...)... to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins... (Thayer p. 405; 3340)

This is the destination of all God's love, mercy, compassion, longsuffering, forbearance and goodness. God is giving men time to repent. To change their mind about their rebellion and to return to him in humble submission. If they did not know that this is where the goodness of God was leading them, then it was now evident and it is time to make a decision. If they continue in their present course then the next verse explains very clearly what will happen to all the morally upright who condemn in others what they themselves practice and never see the inconsistency or repent of it.

The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: 31 inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Acts 17:30-31

5. But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasureth up for thyself wrath.

If they refuse to repent, then only one other possibility remains. He uses "kata" to express the proportion and relationship of this final thought. Is it possible that in proportion to the hardness and impenitence of your heart, you are actually trying to store up wrath and make God as angry as you possibly can. Is that what this is all about? There are many examples of this. The Jews with Moses, Israel under the judges, Israel at the time of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. Israel during the time of Christ. It just seemed like they were trying to make God as angry as possible because of the hardness and impenitence of their "heart."

“*kardia*,... fr a root signifying to quiver or palpitate;... prop. that organ in the animal body which is the centre of the circulation of the blood, and hence was regarded as the seat of physical life:... 2. univ. *kardia* denotes the seat and centre of all physical and spiritual life; and a. *the vigor and seat of physical life*... b. the centre and seat of spiritual life, *the soul or mind, as it is the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affection, purposes, endeavors* [so in Eng. *heart, inner man, etc.*]... of things done *from the heart* i.e. *cordially or sincerely, truly* (without simulation or pretence... BB spec. *of the understanding, the faculty and seat of intelligence*... GG *of the will and character*... DD *of the soul so far forth as it is affected and stirred in a bad way or good, or of the soul as the seat of the sensibilities, affections, emotions, desires, appetites, passions*... 3. used of the middle or central or inmost part of anything, even though inanimate...” (Thayer, p. 325-326; 2588).

The Scriptures use this term to describe “*the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affection, purposes, and endeavors.*” Hearts can be “only evil continually” (Gen 6:5), “hardened” (Ex. 7:13), “willing” (Ex. 35:5), “melted” (Deut. 1:21), “deceived” (Deut. 11:16), “turned away” (Deut. 30:17), and many other things. The Spirit accuses those who condemn in others what they practice and yet feel no need themselves to obey the gospel of having a “hard” heart

“*sklerotes*... (*skleros*) *hardness; trop. obstinacy, stubbornness* ...” (Thayer p. 579; 4643)

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

That which should have been compliant, submissive, changeable was instead harsh, stiff, obstinate and stubborn. Some of the harshest words in the Scriptures have been reserved for people with hard hearts.

And Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as Jehovah had spoken. 14 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Pharaoh’s heart is stubborn, he refuseth to let the people go. . . 15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as Jehovah had spoken. Ex. 7:13-14; 8:15

Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed? 1Sam. 6:6

And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart against turning unto Jehovah, the God of Israel. 2Chr. 36:13

Happy is the man that feareth alway; But he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief. Pr. 28:14

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. Mark 3:5 5

For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again, 40 He hath blinded their eyes, and he hardened their heart; Lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, And should turn, And I should heal them. 41 These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and he spake of him. John 12:39-41

From all these Scriptures (and there are many more), it is clear that a hardened heart is a stubborn, stiff-necked unbending attitude. God deserves to be loved, respected and submitted to. Some harden their hearts and refuse to give God what he asks for. This is especially true of the final verse in John. Those who do not believe in Jesus are withholding their faith and honor because their hearts are hard and their eyes blind. Paul warnrd all men here of exactly the same thing. Those who refuse to obey the gospel when they see the sins of others, have a hardened and “impenitent” heart.

“*ametanoetos*... *admitting no change of mind (amendment), unrepentant, impenitent*...” (Thayer p 32;)

Such people have the “don’t confuse me with the facts, my mind is already made up” mentality. I am going to do what I am going to do and nothing is going to change my mind. There are some who are so stubborn and hardened that they will “*admit no change of mind.*” Those who take this type of attitude toward God and refuse to submit to him will find that all their years were spent

“treasuring” up God’s wrath.

“thesaurizo... to gather and lay up, to heap up, store up: to accumulate riches ...to keep in store, store up, reserve metaph. so to live from day to day as to increase either the bitterness or the happiness of one’s consequent lot...” (Thayer, p. 290; 2343)

This word is normally used of those who “gather and laying up, heap up and store up” in the material realm. Jesus uses it like this in the sermon on the mount.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through and steal Mt. 6:19-20

One must chose by the way they live their lives and determine their priorities whether they will try to gain as much treasure as they possible can for this life’s enjoyment or whether to gather up as much treasure for their enjoyment in the life to come. This is what most people do with their lives.

But the Spirit revealed here that there is another class of men. Those whose hearts are so hard and incapable of being changed that they are actually day by day laying up more and more “wrath” from God. Do they actually want to store up His “wrath?”

“orge,... anger exhibited in punishing, 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” (Thayer, p. 452; 3709)

The day is coming when all who do the things listed in the first chapter will receive the just recompense and punishment that their conduct merits. When that day comes all who have not obeyed the gospel and who practice those things will be punished. Regardless of how much better they are in their own lives. Those who know God will punish one group, yet still refuse to obey are storing up God’s wrath and will receive it.

in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

The “day of wrath” is the final judgment. It is the day when God will give eternal life to some and wrath and indignation to others. It is the day when the righteous judgment of God will be revealed.

The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: 31 inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Acts 17:30-31

God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness and there are some who are actually laying and storing up the wrath that will be poured out upon them when that day arrives.

For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, (even) Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come. 1Th. 1:9-10

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, 2Th. 1:7-9

A day is coming when all the goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering will be removed and the righteous judgement of God will be revealed. God has clearly revealed his feelings in the Scriptures, but those who reject them do not believe it. Someday, all that God has warned against will come to pass, and the reaction of men will be strong indeed.

So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, 50 and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Mt. 13:49-50

God now clearly sets forth what is going to come and how it is going to be done.

6. Who will render to every man according to his works:

On that day of righteous judgment, God will “render” to every man according to his works. He will simply *apodidomi... to give back, restore... to requite, recompense.*” He will give back to each person exactly what his actions on earth deserve. Each man will be requited and recompensed for their actions. The Spirit again uses “kata” which places “=” between the works and what he will give back. They will receive in the same proportion and degree what they have “worked.”

“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)

God will simply take what these men “accomplished,” their acts, deeds and things done, and recompense them for it.

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. 2Cor. 5:10

There is a fundamental fairness to this. God will only return on the head of each man and woman exactly what they deserve for what they have done. This is why the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes it. Without the gospel each man is going to have rendered back to him what his life deserves. Since the wages of sin is death, and all have sinned, Jesus’ death on the cross and the sin cleansing power of His blood are the only hope men have. Those who do not want to be recompensed for condemning in others what they practice (2:1), for despising God’s goodness, or for storing up God’s wrath in the same way others lay up money, must submit to Him now by obeying his son.

He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. Jn. 3:36

God here reveals the judgment day as he will see it. There are only two types of men. They may appear to us in a multitude of different formats, because those who “hinder the truth in unrighteousness” have found multitudes of different ways to accomplish it. But regardless of their outward packaging, in the heart, this is all there is.

will render to every man according to his works:

patience in well-doing

seek for:
glory honor incorruption obey

eternal life
glory
honor
peace

to every man that worketh good,
to the Jew first, and also to the Greek:

factious

obey not the truth
unrighteousness

wrath
indignation
tribulation
anguish

upon every soul of man that worketh evil,
of the Jew first, and also of the Greek;

for there is no respect of persons with God.

Each man and woman will make this choice. They will either seek for glory, honor and eternal life, or they will allow factiousness to take root in their heart and it will drive them away from these things.

7. To them that by patience in well-doing

As was clearly revealed several times in Jesus’ parables, these groups will be separated and will

both be standing before God on the last day. One group are those who after they sinned and fell short of God's glory, still seeking to submit to Him, and are willing to accept whatever terms he is offering. The other side are those who refused to the very end to submit in trusting faith.

While the subject is focused on those who sinned and did not obey the gospel, Paul gives some very important information to those who have obeyed the gospel. The first act of doing well with their good works would be to obey the gospel, but there will be more that will require "*patience in well-doing*." Although translated as a participle "*doing*" is actually the same noun (*ergo*) as used above referring to works and products created by production. Since "*God will render to all according to their works*," he repeats the word "*works*" but our translators chose "*doing*." God will render this to those whose works are "*well*:"

"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)

Those who want their deeds and actions to "*excel*" in the eyes of God. They want to do things that are "*of good constitution*" "*excellent*" "*distinguished*," and "*honorable*." The only means God has given man to do this is to fully trust him and do what he says to do. Those who obey him and then patiently serve him doing all that he designed and planned will be rewarded. The terms "*well doing*" are repeated in Eph 2:10 where the Spirit explains that those who obey the gospel are created in Christ Jesus to do good works.

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.*

All who obey the gospel God must be "*patient*" in their well-doing.

"hupomone... 1. steadfastness, constancy, endurance... in the N. T. the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings... 2. a patient, steadfast waiting for... 3. a patient enduring, sustaining..." (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 644; 5281)

It is a struggle to do these good works. There are many obstacles. One must be "*patient and steadfast, even in the greatest trials and sufferings*." This is what good men and women do, and when they do this, they seek something important.

seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life:

That these are even still possible after we have sinned is a testimony to God's grace and mercy. Since God has revealed that we can actually gain them, those with faith will "*seek*" them diligently.

"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)

God has designed the gospel to help those who want these things. Jesus promised that God would listen and help all who truly seek.

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. Mt. 7:7-8

Those who hear the truth of the gospel and seek this glory and honor and incorruption, are going to receive eternal life. But this seeking can only be fulfilled through patient well-doing. It is the only path, the straitened and narrow one that leads to life (Mt. 7:13-14). Moses drew similar conclusions that brought about his change in life at the age of forty.

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

These are among the precious and exceeding great promises God has used to motivate people.

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

All who seek for “glory - praise, honor,” from God will obey the gospel, while those who are more interested in what man can offer in this life will withhold obedience to God, while those who seek for true honor and pre-eminence from God will obey the gospel.

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

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. Matt 25:21

God also offers “incorruption” and eternal life to those who seek them.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: 43 it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: 44 it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual (body). 1 Cor 15:42-44

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; 15 that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. 16 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 3:14-16

Those who seek for these things by doing the good works God prepared beforehand must obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the only way.

8. But unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth,

Those who do not obey God are “factious.”

*“eritheia,... used of those who electioneer for office, courting popular applause by trickery and low arts... the verb is derived from *erithos* working for hire, a hireling... a mean, sordid fellow) *electioneering* or *intriguing* for office... hence apparently in the N. T. *a courting distinction, a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and factious spirit which does not disdain low arts; partisanship, factiousness*” (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 249; 2052).*

*“eritheia,... is found 7 times in the NT, only in the Epistles... 2. The origin of this rare word, which is attested before the NT only in Aristotle ... in the sense of selfish striving for advantage in a group, is obscure. Probably it is derived from *eritheuo* "be active as a laborer," and not from *eris* a) In Phil 1:17 the proclaimers who are determined by self-interest are contrasted to those whose motivation is love (v. 16). *eritheia* can mean here only conduct determined by selfishness. This is also the case in 2:3, where self-interest and "conceit" are contrasted with humility. Christians who act in this way are concerned with their own well-being, not that of others (cf. v. 4). Rom 2:8 characterizes people who are determined by selfishness also as those who do not obey the truth, are compliant toward unrighteousness, and fall under judgment because they in their stubbornness and impenitent hearts store up for themselves wrath for the day of judgment (v. 5). ...” (Balz, Horst; Schneider, Gerhard (Editors), Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament 2052)*

If one closely examines and considers this definition carefully they will find pure selfishness to be the root. These are people whose lives are self-centered and who will do anything to keep themselves prominent. This was what prompted the attitude of Caiaphas.

The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many signs. 48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. 49 But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest

that year, said unto them, ye know nothing at all, 50 nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. Jn 11:47-50.

It was also this attitude that prompted some in Rome to preach Christ even though they did not truly believe:

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: 16 the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel; 17 but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds. Phil 1:15-17

In these two passages the heart of the factious is openly displayed. In spite of all the evidence and the many signs they even admitted that Jesus did, the Jewish leaders would rather kill Jesus than lose their position of leadership in Jerusalem. For them murder was a better alternative. This is factiousness. This is also what Paul found among those in Rome while imprisoned. Some would actually preach what they did not believe in order to destroy Paul. Many who reject the gospel have been filled with the lust of factiousness. They simply will “*not obey*” the truth.

“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)

The emotional state of mind spoken of in 2:1-3 becomes a barrier that the truth cannot penetrate. Such people can hear and see the truth, but they will “*not allow*” themselves “*to be persuaded or comply with*” it. They “*refuse believe and obedience.*” The leaders of the Jews knew Jesus was performing miracles and that he was above reproach and blameless, but they refused to submit. They chose not to give obedience or belief. They could have, but they wouldn't.

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. Mt 13:14-15

but obey unrighteousness

The irony here is that while they refuse to be persuaded to obey the truth, they allow themselves to be persuaded to “obey” unrighteousness.

“peitho... 1. Active; a. to persuade, i.e. to induce one by words to believe... to cause belief in a thing... b. as in class. Grk... 2. to make friends of, win one's favor, gain one's good-will, ... or to seek to one, strive to please one... c. to persuade unto i.e. to be induced to believe... 2. Passive and Middle... a. to be persuaded, to suffer one's self to be persuaded; to be induced to believe... to be persuaded of a thing concerning a person Heb. 6:9... b. to listen to, obey, yield to, comply with ...to trust, have confidence, be confident...” (Thayer, p. 497-498; 3982).

While factious people refuse the truth, they welcome with open arms the opportunity to obey unrighteousness. Paul uses the same term for obey but removes the (*alpha-privative*). They listen to “unrighteousness - deeds violating law and justice, injustice.” They yield and comply with injustice, they are easily persuaded to fulfill deeds violating law and justice. All of Jesus' miracles could not get the Jewish Sanhedrin to offer obedience to the truth, but the slightest hint that they might lose their place caused them to be persuaded to murder him.

Consider Moses at Mt Sinai. All the plagues, and signs they witnessed and God's spoken word on Mt Sinai revealing the ten commandments to them could not induce and persuade them to believe in God or obey his law. Yet the slightest provocation while Moses was forty days on Mt Sinai led them to be persuaded to make the golden calf and fill their hearts with unrighteous deeds and thoughts. Also notice that the Spirit places truth and unrighteousness as opposites, like light and darkness. When one refuses the truth only unrighteousness remains. All who reject the truth must cling to unrighteousness for there is nothing else. God takes a very strong position against all who do this.

shall be wrath and indignation

This is the fourth time Paul has spoken of God's wrath "*orge, ... anger exhibited in punishing, 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*" (Thayer, p. 452; 3709) in this section. He now adds "indignation."

"thumos, ... (fr. thuo to rush along or on, be in a heat, breathe violently; ... accordingly it signifies both the spirit panting as it were in the body, and 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, ... 2. glow, ardor..." (Thayer, Joseph Henry, op. cit., p. 293; 2372)

All the horrible things that men have done will be brought into the light of day. Each person will hear the verdict upon their life, based upon God's strict justice and what they have done. All mercy, goodness forbearance, and longsuffering will be removed and God's true feelings will be seen. That day will be a day of wrath and indignation. With the "*anger forthwith boiling up*" of "*thumos*" and the "*anger exhibited in punishing,*" of "*orge,*" it will be a fierce outburst indeed.

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. II Th 1:7-9

And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones, 16 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 15-16

When the longsuffering of God finally runs out and the day of judgment arrives his wrath and indignation will be poured out with no holding back. All who will not be persuaded by the truth of the gospel and who instead obey unrighteousness will be swept away by it. There will be great tribulation and anguish in the hearts of those it is directed against.

9. Tribulation and anguish,

When the anger and indignation of God are so poured out, the response in the hearts of those who receive them will be "tribulation" and "anguish."

"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).

"stenochoria... narrowness of place a narrow space, ...dire calamity, extreme affliction, [A.V. distress, anguish]..." (Thayer p 587; 4730)

Though they approach them from different ways, both these terms describe a situation where there is no where to turn and no where to go. When God finally reveals the true magnitude of evil they have practiced, and the grave consequences that it brings, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. They will feel so much pressure, and will be so hemmed in by it that their anguish will be beyond our imagination.

upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek;

Regardless of the reasons why, whether it be ignorance or hypocrisy, every "*pas - all who, of every class or kind*" of soul of man that works evil. ill surely come to every soul now working evil. There won't be any exceptions, there won't be any valid excuses. All who "work" evil and who refuse repentance and obedience to the truth will suffer this fate.

"katergazomai... a. to perform, accomplish, achieve [RV often work]... b. to work out... i.e. to do that from which something results... bring about, result in,... c. ... to fashion, i.e. render one fit for a thing..." (Thayer, P. 339; 2716)

Those who "*perform, accomplish, achieve*" evil. Those who "*do that from which*" evil "*results.*"

“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)

These are the things listed in 1:28-32 that the apostates and their offspring were practicing and which the morally upright condemned yet practiced themselves. If they do that from which *“a mode of thinking feeling or acting is base, wrong and wicked,”* then they will receive the wrath and indignation that leads to tribulation and anguish. This is to be given without partiality to both the Jew and to the Greek.

For the Jew, perhaps the strongest statement so far is that they will receive it first. Just as the Jew received the greater privilege of being first in hearing the gospel (1:16), so now he will be the first to receive this condemnation if it be deserved. In the gospel of Luke a statement of Jesus is recorded that gives deep insight into Paul’s meaning here.

And that servant that knew his lord’s will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more. Lk 12:48

The Jew had so much more to keep them from such an end. When they despised and set it at nought, they placed themselves in the position of being first to receive the wrath and indignation and to feel the tribulation and the anguish. Yet though the anger be fierce against the Jew, it will also be directed against the Gentile.

10. But glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Paul used the terms “glory”, “honor”, “incorruption” and “good” in v 7 to describe these same people. Now he adds peace. The same distinguished splendor and brightness, and the same precious preeminence that was offered to those who patiently do well is here offered to those who do good. The addition of peace can only be fully appreciated when it is placed against the background of tribulation and anguish found in v 9. Peace is defined:

“eirene,... 1. a state of national tranquility; exemption from the rage and havoc of war... 2. peace between individuals, i. e. harmony, concord... 3. security, safety, prosperity, felicity, (because peace and harmony make and keep things safe and prosperous) ... 5. acc. to a conception distinctly peculiar to Christianity, the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is...” (Thayer, p. 182; 1515)

When there is havoc and war, tribulation and anguish elsewhere, the true nature of peace is brought out because peace is the absence of such things. It is the feeling of *“security, safety and prosperity”* one can only feel when there is peace. On the day of judgment, when the majority of the human race is feeling God’s wrath, those who do good will feel *“the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ.”* Those who do well will witness God’s wrath. but not directed against them. They will be exempted. Within the hearts of those who live to do good, will be feelings of honor and glory, just as those who receive a crown in the Olympic Games feel.

Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run; that ye may attain. 25 And every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 1 Cor 9:24-25

Those who strive for the good as the Olympic runner strives for victory who seek for good, who strive to excel, and be useful will receive glory, honor, and peace.

to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Paul again stresses the absolute impartiality of God. Just as he does not allow the Jew/Gentile distinction to sway him regarding punishment, so also it will not sway his judgment of each individual if they do good.

11. For there is no respect of persons with God.

The Spirit uses “*gar*” again as the “*particle of affirmation and conclusion.*” to give “*either the reason and cause of a foregoing statement . . . or some previous declaration is explained.*” “*It adduces the cause or gives the reason of a preceding statement.*” The reason why the Jew first and also the Greek will be punished for doing evil or be rewarded for doing good is because there is no “respect of persons” with God.

“prosopolepsia... respect of persons... partiality, the fault of one who when called on to requite or to give judgment has respect to the outward circumstances of men and not to their intrinsic merits, and so prefers, as the more worthy, one who is rich, high-born, or powerful, to another who is destitute of such gifts...” (Thayer, Joseph Henry, op. cit. p. 551; 4382)

There is no partiality, no favoritism, no way to influence God except by doing right. He cannot be bribed, he cannot be pleaded with, he cannot be swayed by excuses. Nothing brought before God on the judgment day will have any bearing on the outcome of the verdict except the two things listed above. All who are factious will be condemned, and all who repent and obey will be rewarded. God is not interested in any of the attributes of a man’s person. Not wisdom, not beauty, not wealth, power, or might:

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

12. For as many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law.

Again, “*gar*” “*gives the reason and cause of a foregoing statement.*” This time regarding why there is no respect of persons with God. “As many as” have sinned without the law (Gentiles) will perish without the law.

“hosos,... a relative adjective. ... used a. of space [as great as]... of time [as long as]... for so long time as, so long as... b. of abundance and multitude; how many, as many as; how much, as much as:... as many (men) as, all who,... I Tim. 6:1 ... c. of importance: OSA, how great things, i. e. how extraordinary,... d. of measure and degree, in comparative sentences,... the more... so much the more, a great deal...” (Thayer, p. 456; 3745).

This is a term when describing “abundance and multitude” when speaking of things or value “*how many, as many as; how much, as much as*” when speaking of people “*as many (men) as, all who.*” As many men as or all who have sinned without law will receive this fate. Nothing else matters in this point of comparison except the fact that they have “sinned.”

“harmartano... to miss the mark, ... with gen. of the thing missed ... then to err, be mistaken; lastly to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honor, to do or go wrong... to miss one’s aim in the literal sense. ...In the N.T. to wander from the law of God, violate God’s law, sin ... b. ... to commit (lit. sin) a sin ...” (Thayer, p. 30; 264)

If they “*violate God’s law*” or “*wander from the law of God,*” then they “*sin a sin.*” There are some who “*sin a sin*” “without” the law.

“anomos... 1. destitute of (the Mosaic) law used of Gentiles, ... 2. departing from the law, a violator of the law, lawless, wicked...” (Thayer, p. 48; 459)

Those who were not living under the Law given by Moses on Mt Sinai (Rom 1:18-32) are the people under consideration. Though they had not heard of it, and had not agreed to that covenant, they were still sinners. They were sinners because they knew God and refused to glorify him as God. They were without excuse for their idolatry, without excuse for their refusal to glorify God, and without excuse for their ignorance regarding his laws, and the horrible lusts that now controlled them. The judgment of those who did not have the Old Law will proceed exactly as those who do have the Old Law. They will be judged not on the basis of what they did not have, but on the basis of their works. Even without the law their works were sinful. Because they were sinful, and only because of that, they will “perish.”

“apollumi... to destroy ... 1. to destroy i.e. to put out of the way entirely, abolish, put an end to, ruin... contextually, to declare that one must be put to death ... metaph. to devote or give over to eternal misery ... contextually, by one’s conduct to cause another to lose eternal salvation ... Mid. to perish, to be lost, ruined, destroyed ... A... tropically, to incur the loss of true or eternal life; to be delivered up to eternal misery ... B. of things; to be blotted out, to vanish away... to perish, of things which on being thrown away are decomposed... or which are ruined so that they can no longer subserve the use for which they were designed, ... 2. to destroy i.e. to lose;” (Thayer, p. 610-611; 4982)

This is obviously a broad term used to describe various types of destruction. It is used of physical death (Lk 13:3), of the loss of a body part (hand or foot perish - Mt 5:29-30), the withering of a flower (Jas 1:11), what happened the world in the flood and Korah when swallowed by the earth (II Pet 3:6; Jude 1:211). Perhaps its best use to illustrate the idea here:

And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Mt 10:28

Those who sin without the law will suffer the loss of eternal life when they both their soul and body is destroyed in hell.

Thus all hope for any justification based upon ignorance or of not having any law and therefore facing a merciful God are here removed. They need the gospel to be saved! No one’s ignorance of their duties and obligations will exempt them from punishment. It may lessen the degree of their guilt, but cannot remove it completely. There is no hope of salvation to be placed on ignorance. Guilt for sin can only be removed by Jesus Christ, not by ignorance. There is no respect of persons with God. Even without the law they were sinners, and even without the law they will perish.

and as many as have sinned under the law

The construction of the sentence is nearly identical to the one above. The only difference is that these are *“en- in the interior of some whole; within the limits of some space”* the Law of Moses. They are in the midst of the Law. It is their covenant and they are instructed in it, and it was the yoke God put them under. They are under its jurisdiction, know its precepts and when they violate it, they sin under it. Will the possession of the law be a factor in favor of those who have it? Absolutely not! Having the Law was a great privilege. It gave the people a rule of conduct to live by. It gave them a basis of knowing whether they were right or wrong. It was also a great act of grace and kindness on God’s part that it was given to them, and with the animal sacrifices and grace of God it for a time was a system of salvation, 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. Gal 3:24-25

Now that Christ had come and the grace had been removed, all the law could do was judge and condemn.

shall be judged by the law.

The Law of Moses was not some special jewel to be worn around one’s neck and would keep them from judgment. It was a system of righteousness that demanded obedience. Those who violated that law and missed the mark while under it will be judged *“krino - an opinion concerning right and wrong,” “pronounce judgment” “subject to censure”* by *“dia - through “of the means or instrument by which anything is effected” “of the instrument used to accomplish a thing.”* The law was the instrument or means by which the judging would be done. The law could not keep them safe from judgment.

13. For not the hearers of the law are just before God but the doers of the law are justified.

This too was a common error of the Jews in their understanding of their law, that simply coming and hearing it preached made them better. This is what made the Jews so haughty. They believe they were better than all other men simply because they possessed and had the opportunity to hear and learn God’s will. They saw the Law of Moses as the gift from God that it was, but they misunderstood how it was a gift. It was a gift because it showed them what they needed to be

doing. Those who only heard it, but continued to live as those who had never heard it are not made better because they heard it.

God will not respect someone simply because they heard his word, nor will he allow anyone into heaven simply because they heard it. With another “*gar*” he gives the reason why those who sin under the law will be judged by it. Hearing the law does not justify anyone.

Just as all hope for justification on the basis of ignorance and of not having any law bringing special mercy were removed above, so now all hope for God’s somehow being more lenient and merciful to those to whom he has given the Law is also removed. God will be completely impartial. They will be judged on the basis of what they had and what they were capable of doing. The law was given to be kept. It was given to be done and accomplished. Those who hear the law and then live as they please are no better than the Gentiles who did not know the law and lived as they pleased. In order for the law to be of benefit, a man must hear and do that law. In this respect nothing has changed even under the gospel.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. 23 For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: 24 for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25 But he that looketh into the perfect law, the (law) of liberty, and (so) continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing. James 1:22-25

14. (For when Gentiles that have not the law do by nature the things of the law

The translators have supplied a parenthesis in the fourteenth verse in the ASV and NIV and in the thirteenth verse in the KJV and NKJV. This is done to inform the readers that these verses are an explanation of the previous thought interjected before the conclusion in verse sixteen. Since it is an explanation, the thought continues in that verse.

Verses fourteen and fifteen are an explanation and elaboration of the truth that those who sin without law will perish without law and those who sin under the Law will be judged by that Law. Some consider this to be unfair. It appears to them that God is being too harsh if poor lost souls in darkened lands could be judged and condemned, where is the mercy and grace of God?

The first part appears to be perfectly fair. When a Jew stands before God in judgment it is fair and just that he be judged by the Law of Moses that God had given him and told him would judge him. When he is condemned because he violated it, it is only what he deserves because he knew it would happen. But what law did the Gentile violate? How can God be merciful and just in condemning Gentiles when they “did not know any better?” How can God consider him a sinner when he did not know right from wrong?

The Holy Spirit, knowing the reasoning of mankind, grants the possibility that the Gentiles really knew nothing of any law of God. The statement “**when Gentiles that have not the law**” grants that possibility. But it is still fallacious reasoning because all Gentiles “**do by nature the things of the law.**” It is in the term “nature” that the condemnation comes.

“phusis... a. the nature of things, the force, laws, order, of nature; as opp. to what is monstrous, abnormal, perverse... that which is contrary to nature’s laws... b. birth, physical origin... c. a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature... d. the sum of innate properties and powers by which one person differs from others, distinctive native peculiarities, natural characteristics... “ (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 660; 5449)

Here, it is a “*a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature.*” All Gentile nations have such laws. Most Gentile nations consider it wrong to kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, dishonor their parents. By nature they consider these things to be wrong. God here reveals that this is true of all the nations, no matter how vile and corrupt they have become.

these not having the law are a law unto themselves.

Here one sees clearly the need to distinguish between all other law and the law given on Mt Sinai. “The law” refers to the commandments given on Mt Sinai, while “a law” refers to the code of

conduct God will use to judge the Gentiles. God doesn't need the law given on Mt Sinai to condemn people as sinners. Each nation has their own code of what is right and what is wrong. They are all accountable to that code, and can therefore be judged by it. Every nation that has moral standards which coincide with God's standards will be found guilty for violating them. All God has to do is take their own law and use it to pass judgment upon them. The reason they are a law unto themselves is next revealed:

in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts.

The terms "in that they" is

"hostis... whosoever (all those who)... refers to a single person or thing, but so that regard is had to ...a class to which this individual person or thing belongs, and thus it indicates quality: one who, such as one as, of such a nature that" (Thayer, p. 457; 3748)

The entire group of Gentile nations who did not have the Law of Moses and perhaps did not even know it existed had the quality of "showing" the work of the law in their hearts.

"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)

They *"demonstrated and proved by their acts"* the "work" of the law.

"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)

God designed the law to accomplish a very important purpose. It gives man a sense of what is right and what is wrong so he would choose what is right. The Gentile nations manifested and displayed the product and accomplishment of the law in their own hearts. Though they did not have the Mosaic code, the fruits of morality and goodness which it produced in the Jew could be plainly seen in any Gentile community. Hence, no one can argue that God has no case against them. All heathen nations possess sentiments which reveal the effects of the Law. The Jew had it written on stone, every Gentile had it to some degree written within his heart.

Anyone who traveled to the Jewish nation would see the affects of the law in that nation. They could see that Jews ate differently than others, that they had distinctions in their food and days. That they had a penal code that required punishment. The affects of the Mosaic Code were everywhere. When one left Jerusalem and went to Greece or Rome, they would still see the affects of law. It was not the law of Moses, and was not as righteous, stringent, or holy, but there were still laws. It might be the law of a senate, emperor or king, but laws were made. Murder was punished by death, stealing and bearing false witness were punished. One can see the same work and affect whether they went to Jerusalem, Rome, Athens or Nineveh. All heathen nations have law. When their law coincided with God's law then God could use it to judge them. It is just that simple.

their conscience bearing witness therewith and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them).

The Spirit then offers two irrefutable proofs of the truth of this reasoning. The first is inward. Their conscience bore witness to them when they did either right or wrong. It excused them when they did what they thought was right and it accusing them when they did what they thought was wrong. Once a knowledge of good or evil entered into their minds, their "conscience" worked within them to do one or the other.

"suneidesis... [lit. 'joint-knowledge']... a. the consciousness of anything... b. the soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending the one, condemning the other; conscience..." (Thayer, p. 602-603; 4893)

The conscience of the Jew did not work any differently than this. The law of Moses and the law of

Gentile nations worked exactly the same way. When they are the same laws, then God can use any Gentile law to condemn an individual as a sinner. When any one violates that which he knows to be wrong, he becomes a sinner. The Spirit testifies that the conscience of the Jew and the conscience of the Gentile worked exactly the same way when the laws were the same.

His second proof is that their outward reasoning about one another also proved it. Read the writings of the heathens! Even without the law of Moses they accused some among them of being evil and excused others as being good. Heroes and villains abound in all cultures! Heroes if they did what was right and villains if they did what was wrong. The accusing and excusing is not done by God but by their own conscience and mind. Is not God then completely justified to take their standards as they harmonize with his own law and judge them accordingly?

The question often arises here: Does this verse teach that God will save or condemn these people on the basis of their conscience? Whether the doctrine is true or not I will not venture a guess. That this passage does not teach it I will confidently affirm. Paul is speaking of God's right to judge and condemn these people and still be fair and just. The entire context revolves around this. In Chapter One he conclusively proved that they were all condemned. In Chapter Three he will affirm it again. This statement is only offered as a glimpse of how the judgment day is to be conducted. All will stand before him, the books will be opened and God will then manifest to them how they violated his law and knew it was wrong when they did it since their own law condemned it too, their own conscience accused them, and their own writers condemned it. That will be all that is necessary to justify their being condemned.

16. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men.

Those that sin without the Law will perish without the law, and those who sin under the law will be judged by that law. This will be done in the day when God judges all those minute things which go on in a mans mind and are a secret to all others. On the judgment day all will be opened and laid bare. On that day with or without law men will be shown to be sinners.

according to my gospel by Jesus Christ.

With "kata" Paul affirms that this is exactly what the gospel teaches. This is what God wants man to be told because it is the absolute truth. When that day arrives, Jesus Christ will be the judge and the gospel which Paul preached clearly revealed this. that God would judge the world.

The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: 31 inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Acts 17:30-31

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

ROMANS 2:17-29

Introduction / Review

The Holy Spirit began this section in 1:18 by discussing God's feelings (wrath) toward those first generation apostates who knew he was God, but refused to thank him for all he had done for them and gradually turned completely away from him. Under this general heading he also included all their offspring who were still without excuse because they could have found their way back to God if they had pondered the evidence and had wanted to do so. As he described their ungodly and unrighteous conduct, he concluded by stating that all who do such things are worthy of death (1:18-32).

After describing this segment, the Spirit then turns to all who are left in the human race. These are those who do know God, and who agree with God's judgment that those who rejected him in the manner described above and practice the wicked conduct then described are in fact worthy of death. They are in complete agreement with God on this one point, yet felt no need to obey the gospel themselves (2:1-16). These are those morally upright individuals in every nation who feel that their own conduct will be good enough for God. After proving that none of these people are on any better moral footing without the gospel than those listed earlier, he moves on to charge the Jews specifically. Though the Jews who had rejected Jesus and had not obeyed the gospel would definitely be condemned by the words in 2:1-16, the Holy Spirit reveals that God has some very specific things to say all who are of Abraham yet have not obeyed the gospel. Their feelings of moral superiority over the Gentile nations had been a scourge to their repentance even in the times of the prophets. God bitterly complained through Isaiah that though he had spread out his hands to Israel in their rebellion, and tolerated their provocations in hopes of repentance, their "holier than thou" toward the Gentiles was like smoke in his nose.

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. 6 Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, yea, I will recompense into their bosom Isa. 65:2-6

Even in the days of John the Baptist, though morally superior to others because of their connection with Abraham, and God had him cry out strongly against it.

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

Their own pride and arrogance made them stubborn, stiff-necked and completely unable to see their sin. This had to be broken and removed or they would never believe the gospel, and thus never received the power of God unto salvation. Therefore this section strips away all pretence and rationalization. Even if they had missed the fact that they were condemned under both the previous sections, if they had any honesty and integrity left in their hearts, they would not escape it now.

He begins by describing what they had built their confidence upon (2:17-20). God had indeed elevated these people to a high position when he called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees! He had given them many things of honor and distinction. What they failed to realize was a simple truth Jesus revealed:

And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many (stripes); 48 but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few (stripes). And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more. Lk. 12:47-48

The reality is that the very things the Jews rested upon as their means of salvation would be the things that would most strongly condemn them. The gifts and blessings God had given them ought to have made them more pure and devout, since they were just as evil and wicked as those who didn't have the same opportunities would lead to a greater condemnation.

17. But if thou bearest the name of a Jew,

It is this kind of plain and blunt speech that caused the Jews to become so angry at Paul in his preaching. There was no way to rationalize what he was saying in such a way that it did not apply to them. All who are called Jews would know immediately that he was speaking of them. Paul was not afraid to name names and give people the opportunity to see themselves clearly. Since obedience to the gospel is the only means of salvation, they must be moved to obey the gospel, the section begins with a blanket condemnation of all who "bear the name" of Jew.

"eponomazo... to put a name upon, name; pass. to be named: Rom 2:17..." (Thayer p. 246; 2028)

The term Jew, along with Hebrew and Israelite are all scriptural designations of God's chosen people. When God called Abraham and promised that he would make a great nation (Gen 12:1-3), he was first called a Hebrew.

And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner. And these were confederate with Abram. Gen. 14:13

Later Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:14,17) and Pharaoh's chief butler (Gen 41:12) also called Joseph a Hebrew. This name stayed with them all through their history and even Paul used it as a title of honor.

circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Phil. 3:5

It was God who changed Jacob's name to Israel, giving it too a special meaning.

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. Gen. 32:27-28

It is not until the ten tribes were carried away to Assyria (2 Kings 16:6) that the term Jew appeared in the Scriptures. But after that time it became their primary designation. Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther use it extensively as do the Gospels and Acts. These three terms, Hebrew, Israel, and Jew are the honorable names by which God's chosen people are called. Paul does not use "Hebrew" in Romans, but uses "Israel" twelve and "Jew" eleven times to designate those who were specially chosen by God to be his nation.

"ioudaios . . . Jewish; a. joined to nouns, belonging to the Jewish race. . . b. without a noun, substantively, Jewish as respects birth, race, religion; a Jew... before the exile citizens of the kingdom of Judah; after the exile all the Israelites... [syn. ebraios, ioudaios, israelites: "restricting ourselves to the employment of these three words in the N.T. we may say that in the first is predominantly noted language; in the second, nationality; in the third (the augustest title of all), theocratic privileges and glorious vocation" (Trench §39)..." (Thayer p. 305-306; 2453)

Like American, Jew defines their nationality, but it also defines their race and their religion. Many emotions were therefore tied to this term. They deemed it a compliment of the highest honor to be called by that name, and they were right. The Holy Spirit does not minimize this. Actually he emphasizes it! It was a great honor to be a Jew, but once they take the name, it also brings great responsibility.

retest upon the law

Not only had they been given the name Jew which they bore with pride, but they also "rested upon" the law.

"epanapauo... 1. to cause to rest upon anything... to rest upon anything... metaph. ... to lean upon, trust

to, Rom 2:17..." (Thayer p 228; 1879)

The law had been given to the Jewish nation on Mt Sinai by God. It was a special gift that made them different than all the other nations.

Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. 7 For what great nation is there, that hath a god so nigh unto them, as Jehovah our God is whensoever we call upon him? 8 And what great nation is there, that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Dt. 4:6-8

Yet even in the passage describing the great privilege and honor set forth by this gift, it is also made clear to them that they must keep and do them, and that it is only by keeping and doing them that they will reveal their wisdom and understanding. They had ignored this truth throughout their history. Blinded to the need to keep it by the fact that they possessed it, somehow they had made themselves believe that the honor God had bestowed upon them in giving them the law was enough to be right in His eyes. It never seemed to dawn upon them that they would also be expected to keep it, and were cast off by God if they rejected it. All through the history recorded in Judges and Kings they could never be made to see this truth. God was now trying again.

gloriest in God

These people also felt very strongly about their close relationship with God.

"kauchaomai... in the N. T. often used by Paul [some 35 times; by James twice]; to glory (whether with reason or without):... to glory (on account) of a thing..." (Thayer p. 342; 2744)

Most English speaking people today have replaced "*glory on account of a thing*" with "*gain self-esteem from*" or "*take pride in.*" These are the things that make people feel good about themselves and give them self-respect.

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

A wise man feels important because he is wise, a mighty man takes pride in his strength, and a wealthy man feels good about himself because of his wealth. Man uses such things to gauge success, prowess and skill. God revealed in Jeremiah that there is only one thing in existence that ought to give people self-respect and can be used to gauge success and worth: A knowledge of God.

This is exactly what these Jews claimed to be doing. They considered their knowledge of God to be their reason for glorying. Again, this is not a condemnation, it is a description of what these people were doing that made them believe they were saved and did not need to obey the gospel! The description continues into the next verse also.

18. And knowest his will

God had revealed his will to the nation of Israel. Beginning with Abraham who had the gospel preached to him beforehand.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, (saying,) In thee shall all the nations be blessed. Gal. 3:8

This continued with the Law and the Prophets, where God revealed exactly what he expected of them, and clearly revealed in prophecy what would be done in the future. He gave them his "will."

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)

He revealed to them what he had "*determined shall be done,*" along with his "*inclination and desire.*" The Jews living in Paul's day prided themselves in "knowing" this will.

“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)

They considered it a high honor to have *“come to know”* and *“get a knowledge”* of these things, and they were right.

and approvest the things that are excellent,

This was another thing that the Jews took great pride in. They had worked their skills down to the point where they were able to “approve” of those things God had revealed to be excellent.

“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 had *“tested, examined, proved and scrutinized”* everything in their lives by God’s Law, and only held to those things that God approved as *“excellent:”*

“diaphero... 1. to bear or carry through any place... 2. to carry different ways, i.e. a. to carry in different directions, to different places...to differ.... b. to test prove the things that differ, i.e. to distinguish between good and evil, lawful and unlawful Rom. 2:18,... to approve the things that excel...” (Thayer p 143; 1308)

They chose the fine distinctions that led to excellence. They put to the test the things that differed from the Law and only kept the things that were just. These Jews were meticulous in their observance of the fine distinctions in the Law. Even Jesus noted this, and commended them for it.

But woe unto you Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and every herb, and pass over justice and the love of God: but these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Lk. 11:42

The Jews had the proper conditions for knowing what was truly good and excellent and what was not. They felt they were selecting the good and rejecting the bad. They were rightly pleased with themselves for this.

being instructed out of the law,

This was another of the things that gave esteem and value to themselves. They received their “instruction” from God’s law.

“katecheo... prop. to sound towards, sound down upon, resound... 2. to teach orally, to instruct... In the N.T. only used by Luke and Paul... by hearing the law, wont to be publicly read in the synagogues, Rom 2:18... 3. To inform by word of mouth; pass. to be orally informed” (Thayer p. 340; 2727)

They had been trained from their youth with oral instruction from God’s law.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; 7 and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Dt. 6:6-7

What a wonderful privilege these people had been given. Their parents had taught them in the manner described above. They held this rightfully as a great honor.

Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor thy father and mother. 21 And he said, All these things have I observed from my youth up. Lk. 18:20-21

And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2Tim. 3:15

They knew it was a blessed privilege to be allowed to hear God’s law proclaimed to them in this way.

19. And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them that art in darkness.

Added to their feelings of esteem and self-respect was also a “confidence” that they were a guide to the spiritually blind and a light to those who were in darkness.

“peitho... 1. Active; a. to persuade, i.e. to induce one by words to believe... to cause belief in a thing... b. as in class. Grk... 2. to make friends of, win one’s favor, gain one’s good-will, ... or to seek to one, strive to please one... c. to persuade unto i.e. to be induced to believe... 2. Passive and Middle... a. to be persuaded, to suffer one’s self to be persuaded; to be induced to believe... to be persuaded of a thing concerning a person Heb. 6:9... b. to listen to, obey, yield to, comply with ...to trust, have confidence, be confident... “ (Thayer, p. 497-498; 3982).

With everything revealed above, the Jews “*trusted, and had confidence*” in themselves. They were “*persuaded,*” (in their own minds), that this was the position they held. They strongly believed that God had made them guides to the blind, and lights to those in darkness. Though it was true that those who had cast off God, needed someone to guide them back, only God’s Word could do this. But these Jews considered themselves as the ones to do it. It bred a confidence and an arrogance into them that was hard to touch.

This is always the characteristic mark of those who believe that they are right and everyone else is wrong. There is no humility and poverty of spirit in such people. There is no room for repentance and an acknowledgment of wrong in the hearts of those with such confidence in themselves. Even today those “religious” people who view themselves as the Jews did here will refuse to obey the gospel. They are so confident that they are right that they cannot listen to the things that would show where they are wrong.

Those who hold to the truth and who have truly obeyed the gospel from the heart, realize that only God’s word has this ability and that they are only “earthen vessels” who must buffet their own bodies and bring them into subjection lest even they should be rejected.

Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves; 2Cor. 4:6-7

I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air: 27 but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. 1Cor. 9:26-27

What the Jews possessed was a confidence in their own understanding and ability, and it is incredibly dangerous. Though they thought this about themselves, they were wrong, and they ultimately killed Jesus who really was the light of the world and the guide to the blind.

Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit. Mt. 15:14

Ye blind guides, that strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel! Mt. 23:24

Not even Christians are immune from this danger!

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: Rev. 3:17

20. A corrector of the foolish.

They were also confident that their position of life was that of being a “corrector” of those who are foolish.

“paudeutes, ...(paideuo)... 1. an instructor, preceptor, teacher... chastiser”

Their knowledge of the law had given them this confidence. They were the instructor. Their knowledge of the law led to believe that they were a preceptor or teacher of those who were “foolish.”

“aphron... without reason... senseless, foolish, stupid; without reflection or intelligence, acting rashly...”

(Thayer, p. 90; 878)

These foolish are those who are without knowledge of the law and thus unable to act with reason or intelligence. These Jews had the knowledge the foolish lacked and could bring it to their attention. This also was a great honor which any Jew reading the epistle would wholeheartedly agree with. I can instruct and train just like little children those who do not know that which God would have them to do. The problem again was the arrogance it brought. Because they felt this way they were not open to the truth. It too is very dangerous and leads only to pride and arrogance. Jesus revealed what they really were and it is frightening to ponder just how wrong they were.

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter. . . 15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves. Mt. 23:13,15

Jesus absolutely forbid this attitude from entering into His church.

But all their works they do to be seen of men: for they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders (of their garments,) 6 and love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 and the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called of men, Rabbi. 8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren. 9 And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, (even) he who is in heaven. 10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, (even) the Christ. 11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted. Mt. 23:5-12

a teacher of babes,

They had the law to direct the people on how to live. Those who were young and in the position of needing training and guidance were taken in by these people and instructed in all the necessary things. They would watch them grow in knowledge and in walking the path they were directing them to walk.

having in the law the form of knowledge and of the truth.

This truly was a great quality that God had blessed them with. He had given them the law and the law contained the “form” of knowledge and truth.

“morphosis... 1. a forming, shaping... 2. form; i.e. a. the mere form, semblance... b. The form befitting the thing or truly expressing the fact, the very form...” (Thayer p. 419; 3446)

It refers to the form that truly expresses the fact. These people held in the law the true forms that knowledge and truth must express themselves in. The writer of Hebrews expressed this concept in a way that illustrates its fulness and glory.

It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us: Heb 9:23-24

The things God revealed to the Jews in the Law, were the copies of the things in the heaven. God gave them the “*form befitting the thing or truly expressing the fact!*” He gave them “*the very form.*” The truths revealed in the law were a perfect representation of heavenly things. They revealed the realities of spiritual service in heaven, and the morality and holiness by which one should approach God. They also revealed the form of God’s plans for His people. All of these wonderful, great, awesome privileges belonged to them. This had led them from humility and a conviction of the awesome nature of their responsibility to a haughty egotism which led them to use it as a badge of salvation and blinded them to their true condition. Great privileges can and often do that. Paul will now burst their bubble. They had all of the above, and it had profited them nothing.

For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled (them) by condemning (him). 28 And though they found no cause of death (in him), yet asked they of Pilate that he should be slain. 29 And when they had fulfilled all things that were written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb.

21 thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?

The Holy Spirit has now finished revealing what the Jews thought about themselves. With a “therefore” he now begins a transition.

“*oun...* a conj. indicating that something follows from another necessarily; [al. regarding the primary force of the particle as confirmatory or continuative, rather than illative...] 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), l. q. *wherefore...* b. in questions, *then, therefore...* c. in epanalepsis, i.e. it serves to resume a thought or narrative interrupted by intervening matter... It serves to gather up summarily what has already been said, or even what cannot be narrated at length... e. it serves to adapt examples and comparisons to the case in hand... “ (Thayer, p. 463-464; 3767)

With all of the above truths, “*something follows...necessarily.*” If they were all that they thought they were, then some things must naturally follow. This is where the Spirit hopes to prick their conscience and hopefully bring about a full conversion. The sad reality is that they were not what they thought they were, and what now follows proves it to be true.

The Spirit uses three different terms in the first three questions. Teachest, preacheest, and sayest. The first term is “teach.”

“*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)

This obviously implies more than just a casual understanding of something. They had studied it to the point where they could “*impart instruction and instil doctrine.*” When someone masters a subject well enough to teach it to others, there ought to be a reasonable expectation that they could also instruct themselves also.

This question is one that all teachers must ponder carefully. When one becomes expert enough in God’s word to teach others, isn’t logical that they ought to be teaching themselves as well? Does it not make sense that those who are being taught have the right to expect that their teachers are also learning and practicing what they teach. The Spirit is again continuing the very things Jesus said to them.

Then spake Jesus to the multitudes and to his disciples, 2 saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses seat: 3 all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, (these) do and observe: but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not. 4 Yea, they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger. Mt. 23:1-4

Paul warned Timothy to give careful heed to these things lest they happen to him also.

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Till I come, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 15 Be diligent in these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy progress may be manifest unto all. 16 Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee. 1Tim. 4:12-16

The husbandmen that laboreth must be the first to partake of the fruits. 2Tim. 2:6

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. Jas. 3:1-2

All who teach the word of God must be the first to partake of the fruits of it. Those who teach others obviously know it well enough to apply it to themselves. It is the most high handed and wicked of all sins when a man teaches strongly against something but continues to practice it himself. Lest they miss this point, the Spirit now moves to specifics.

thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

“Preaching” is a stronger term than teaching.

“kerusso... to be a herald, to officiate as a herald, to proclaim after the manner of a herald, always with the suggestion of formality, gravity and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed a. to publish, to proclaim openly: something which has been done b. used of the public proclamation of the gospel and matters pertaining to it, made by John the Baptist, by Jesus, by the apostles and other Christian teachers (Thayer p. 346; 2784)

Within this term there is *“formality, gravity and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed.”* Those who do this, know that it is God’s will they are proclaiming and they know that this command must be obeyed. This one comes right out of the Ten Commandments which Israel heard directly from the mouth of God, and which were then written by God on the two tables. They knew this! They knew it was wrong to steal and they were preaching with authority that it was wrong to steal. This is not just an illustration, but a charge against the Jewish people. Throughout their long history, the prophets condemned them for stealing. They robbed God, widows and the poor, all the while teaching “thou shalt not steal.”

Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. 9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods that ye have not known, 10 and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered; that ye may do all these abominations? 11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, saith Jehovah. Jer.7:8-11

The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery; yea, they have vexed the poor and needy, and have oppressed the sojourner wrongfully. Ezek. 22:29

Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation. Mal. 3:8-9

And in his teaching he said, Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes, and (to have) salutations in the marketplaces, 39 and chief seats in the synagogues, and chief places at feasts: 40 they that devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; these shall receive greater condemnation. Mk. 12:38-40

These are but a few of the many accusations God made against the children of Israel are listed above. The Spirit knew that if they had a tender conscience they would know they were guilty of this sin.

22 thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?

Another of the Ten Commandments is the sin of adultery. This time the Spirit uses the term “sayest” which refers to words spoken of which a man is fully aware of their meaning and substance.

lego refers to the meaning and substance of what is spoken;(Thayer, p. 368; 2980).

Those who “say” in this manner know exactly what the command means and as they pass it on to others, are they fulfilling it themselves? If a man tells others that it they should not commit adultery, is it not a reasonable expectation that they have learned not to do it also? What justification can he offered for such conduct?

How can I pardon thee? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they committed adultery, and assembled themselves in troops at the harlots’ houses. 8 They were as fed horses roaming at large; every one neighed after his neighbor’s wife. 9 Shall I not visit for these things? saith Jehovah; and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Jer. 5:7-9

In the prophets of Jerusalem also I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies; and they strengthen the hands of evil-doers, so that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them become unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. Jer. 23:14

The very fact that the Spirit chooses this one is clear proof that they have not yet left this sin

behind.

thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou rob temples?

The Spirit also revealed that they believed and claimed to “abhor” idols.

bdelusso- (fr. bdeo, quietly to break wind, to stink); 1, to render foul, to cause to be abhorred ... abominable... to turn oneself away from on account of the stench; metaphorically, to abhor, detest (Thayer p. 99; 948)

Idols were an abomination to them. They considered anything to do with them a foul stench. They proclaimed and believed that they absolutely detested everything about idols. Yet the Spirit here asks them if in reality they “rob temples.”

“hierosuleo... the robbery of temples, originally the removal of sacred property from a sacred site, is in Greek, Roman and Egyptian eyes one of the most serious of offences... in the OT we are reminded of Dt 7:25f with special reference to relationships with the heathen peoples of Canaan, and their definitive extirpation, the possession of idols and their reception into houses are forbidden. They are an offense to God and fall under the ban. Even the silver and gold in them must be rejected lest it become a snare. Everything must be burned. ... In R. 2:22 Paul accuses the Jews if despising idolaters and yet of robbing temples themselves. ... any contemporary reader would take such a list literally...” (Kittel, Vol 3 p 255-256)

It may not be possible for us to fully understand the accusation being made here. There are few statements regarding the Jews and idolatry and temple robbing in the New Testament. Perhaps God’s warning about this will help better understand.

The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein; for it is an abomination to Jehovah thy God. 26 And thou shalt not bring an abomination into thy house, and become a devoted thing like unto it: thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a devoted thing. Deut. 7:25-26

God wanted them so far removed from idols that they did not even covet the gold or silver that was on them. Because of the use it had been put to it was to be burned and destroyed. They claimed that this is what they were doing, but the Spirit asked them if they actually went into the temples themselves and robbed them, or stole their shrines. We know that in Ephesus the making of such shrines was big business, and at the end of the riot, the clerk absolved them of the crime of robbing temples(same root as here).

For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no little business unto the craftsmen; ...37 For ye have brought (hither) these men, who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess. Acts 19:24, 33

Whatever the blatant sin was, the Spirit struck it home to their conscience with these words.

23 thou who gloriest in the law, through thy transgression of the law dishonorest thou God?

There is a very powerful rebuke here. God’s selection of the Jews to be his own special nation and His gift to them of the law of Moses made them a very great and special nation of people.

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. Deut. 7:6

And what great nation is there, that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Deut. 4:8

The Jews “gained self-esteem from” and “took pride in” their possession of the law. They rightly saw it as a great honor. It made them special and chosen of God. The stern warning they are now receiving from the Holy Spirit stems from the fact that they had taken the things God had given to honor them and used them in such a way as to bring dishonor upon God. All who received the law and kept it as a treasured thing and held it up as their reason for being special ought keep it. It should be their highest goal to keep that which God had given them. They knew it was from God and considered themselves favored because they had it yet they “transgressed” it.

“parabasis... a going over; metaph. a disregarding, violating... absolutely, the breach of a definite, promulgated, ratified law...” (Thayer p. 478-479; 3847)

When they *“disregarded”* and *“violated”* God’s law they should have felt shame. They should have confessed that they had sinned and fallen short. Instead they blatantly breached the law, all the while proclaiming that they were special because they had this law. The arrogance and blindness here is almost beyond belief. How could they continue to boast to others about a law which they did not keep? Those with any sense of shame could never do such a thing. They would either stop proclaiming how special they were, or they would admit to their own sinful behavior. But they did neither. They proclaimed to the Gentiles that they were God’s chosen people because He had chosen them above all people and given them the law and then *“dishonored”* God in their eyes by blatantly disregarding and showing no real respect to God’s law.

“atimazo... to make atimos, to dishonor, insult, treat with contumely, whether in word, in deed, or in thought...” (Thayer, p. 83; 818)

Those who knew nothing more of Jehovah than what they learned from the Jews complete lack of respect for His commands would think very little of Him. Hence they have taken that which God sought to bless them with and used it as a curse to God.

24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, even as it is written.

The Spirit again uses *“gar”* as the *“particle of affirmation and conclusion.”* *“By the use of this particle, either the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added. . . or some previous declaration is explained.”* This verse gives the reason and cause for the previous one. They do in fact proclaim they are special because they are the people of God in possession of God’s law, and through their transgressions they have actually brought about God’s dishonor. The sad reality is that the *“name”* of God is blasphemed because of what they have done.

“onoma... the name by which a person or a thing is called, and distinguished from others; 1. univ.: of prop. names... 2. By a usage chiefly Hebraistic the name is used for everything which the name covers, everything the thought or feeling of which is roused in the mind by mentioning, hearing, remembering, the name, i.e. for one’s rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds, etc. ...” (Thayer, p. 447-448; 3686)

All that God is and stands for has been blasphemed because of the conduct of His people. The passage the Spirit is most likely referring is found in Ezekiel.

Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 17 Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their way and by their doings: their way before me was as the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity. 18 Wherefore I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood which they had poured out upon the land, and because they had defiled it with their idols; 19 and I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. 20 And when they came unto the nations, whither they went, they profaned my holy name; in that men said of them, These are the people of Jehovah, and are gone forth out of his land. 21 But I had regard for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations, whither they went. Ezek. 36:16-21

The Jews had caused the profaning and blaspheming of God’s name all the way back to the times when God had to allow other nations to punish them because of their disobedience to His law. This actually goes all the way back to the earliest days after Joshua’s death and the heathen nations being allowed to afflict them. So many times the surrounding nations assumed it was God’s weakness that gave them the ability to destroy them, when in reality it was their own wickedness that brought this dishonor upon God. The hypocrisy of God’s people has always brought the worst insults that are hurled against God.

Even David’s sin with Bathsheba brought God’s name into blasphemy.

However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die.” 2 Sam 12:14

God was again being “blasphemed” among the Gentiles, because of the hypocrisy of these Jews. They could not deny this, and what a terrible charge it was.

“blasphemeo... to speak reproachfully, rail at, revile, calumniate ... Passive ... to be evil spoken of, reviled, railed at... Spec. of those who by contemptuous speech intentionally come short of the reverence due to God or to sacred things...” (Thayer, p. 102; 987)

Gentiles were speaking reproachfully about God, they were reviling him and not giving him reverence. All of it directly traced back to the conduct of the Jews. All the above claims fall into dust as the truth of what really occurred dawned upon them. They had reached their potential. They had fallen far short of what might have been. All they had really accomplished with these superior blessings was a contempt for God among others.

25 For circumcision indeed profiteth, if thou be a doer of the law:

The Holy Spirit now introduces circumcision, which was another of the cherished hopes of the Jewish nation that they are in covenant relationship with God. The sign of the covenant between God and the offspring of Abraham predates even the law.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. 8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession. And I will be their God. 9 And God said unto Abraham, And as for thee, thou shalt keep my covenant, thou, and thy seed after thee throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee. Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 And ye shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin. And it shall be a token of a covenant betwixt me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any foreigner that is not of thy seed. 13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised. And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people. He hath broken my covenant. Gen.17:7-14

Much like a wedding ring today, circumcision was the sign and seal of the Jews covenant relationship with God. Those who were circumcised upon the eighth day were in covenant relationship with God, while those who were not were “cut off from his people” because they “hath broken my covenant.” The Jews prized it very highly, but misunderstood its intent. The Spirit now makes it very clear. Circumcision only “profits if one be a doer of the law.

“hopheleo... to assist, to be useful or advantageous, to profit: absol. Rom. 2:25; with acc. ouden to be of no use, to effect nothing...” (Thayer p. 683; 5623)

Circumcision is only useful and advantageous under a certain prescribed set of circumstances. In and of itself, circumcision was only a promise of what was to be. It was a sign between a young man and God that he was of Abraham. The act of cutting off the foreskin on the eighth day, was a necessary first step in this covenant, but was not the exclusive thing that kept one in covenant relationship with God. For the covenant to remain in affect, the person must also be a “doer” of the law.

“prasso...to do, practice, effect... 1. to exercise, practice, be busy with, carry on... used of performing the duties of an office... to undertake to do... 2. to accomplish, to perform... of unworthy acts, to commit, perpetrate... 3. to manage public affairs, transact public business,...” (Thayer, p. 535; 4238)

Those Jewish men who were truly in covenant relationship with God grew up to “practice,” “be busy with,” and “perform” the law.

but if thou be a transgressor of the law, thy circumcision is become uncircumcision.

While those Jewish men who after being circumcised on the eighth, grew up practicing the law received the profit of circumcision, those who were transgressors had something entirely different occur. Those who would not live by the law and who openly violated it had no reason even in the law to believe that their circumcision would somehow save them. God was very clear about this

point.

Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that profaneth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Ex. 31:14

But the soul that doeth aught with a high hand, whether he be home-born or a sojourner, the same blasphemeth Jehovah; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 31 Because he hath despised the word of Jehovah, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him. Num. 15:30-31

If a circumcised man grew up and to violate the sabbath, any other of the ten commandments, or committed any with a high hand, he was cut off. There are many other commands in the Scripture that legislate either death or a cutting off as the punishment for their violation. The Holy Spirit here puts it forth plainly. God always considered those who violated His laws as one whose circumcision “is become” uncircumcision.

“ginomai... 1. to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being... to be born... of the origin of all things... 2. to become i.q. to come to pass, happen, of events... 3. to arise, appear in history, come upon the stage of men appearing in public... 4. to be made, done, finished... 5. to become, be made, “in passages where it is specified who or what a person or thing is or has been rendered, as respects quality, condition, place, rank, character...” (Thayer, p. 115-116; 1096).

This is a verb of being. It describes a state of existence. It is generally used of birth and the life that continues after it. Here, God has changed the state of their existence from being circumcised and having a covenant with God to being uncircumcised and having no covenant with God. God removes the value and meaning of the circumcision. They are just like an uncircumcised man in the eyes of God if they violate the law.

26 If therefore the uncircumcision keep the ordinances of the law ,

With a “therefore,” the Holy Spirit rips away the last line of defense these unconverted Jews might want to put forth. This truly destroys any hope that their circumcision might avail something. The previous verse reveals the truth so often revealed in the Judges and Prophets. God never had any problem destroying and cutting off those circumcised Jews who rejected his law. Yet at the same time, God never had any problem accepting an uncircumcised man who was keeping “the ordinances” of the law.

“dikaionoma... 1. that which has been deemed right so as to have the force of law; a. what has been established and ordained by law, an ordinance: univ. of an appointment of God having the force of law, Rom. 1:32... plural used of the divine precepts of the Mosaic law...” (Thayer, p. 151; 1345)

This was the same term used back in 1:32.

who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them. Rom. 1:32

Not only were there heathen apostates who knew the ordinances of the law and violated them. There were also those who knew the ordinances of the law and kept them. We will not know until the day of Judgment how many of these people there were, but the Spirit states simply that those who did will be reckoned by God as the circumcised. Though not a man, Rahab and Ruth were such people. Naaman and Cornelius, also had these qualities, as did Nebuchadnezzar at the end of his life. They knew the righteous ordinances of the law, and they kept them (same as practice above). Prior to the giving of the law, there were men like Melchizedek and Job. Men who were noted for righteousness and uprightness. Men who had no 10 commandment law to keep, men who simply lived the ordinances of the law. They were uncircumcised, yet reckoned by God to hold the same privilege which the Jew possessed because of his circumcision. An interesting question could be posed as to how many such men there were between Job and Melchizedek and Cornelius? But Deut 29:29 holds one back from such speculation. This may only be a hypothetical question offered to the Jews to wake them up and show that nothing special could be attributed to circumcision. That unless it was complimented with the keeping of the law was nullified. That even an uncircumcised

individual if they kept the ordinances of the law would be viewed by God as he viewed the circumcision. Yet even if there were none between Melchizedek and Job and Cornelius, these three men had done it. They would be more than enough to fulfill all that Paul is speaking of here. The Spirit will deal with this more fully in Chapter Four with Abraham being righteous both before he was circumcised and after.

The context here centers on breaking the arrogance of the Jews. Any Jewish male who expected God to respect his circumcision in spite of his wickedness was doomed to disappointment. God had the power to make an uncircumcised man who kept his law circumcised in his sight. He also had the power to make a circumcised man who did not keep his law into an uncircumcised man in his sight.

shall not his uncircumcision be reckoned for circumcision?

Instead of using the verb of being, which he could not use since the man was still in fact uncircumcised, the Spirit uses the term “reckoned for”

“logizomai... In profane Greek there are two distinctive uses. Common to both is the idea of an act of thought according to strict logical rules. A. In commercial dealings... for “reckoning,” and is found as such in the legal language of Demosthenes, then ... for “evaluating” ... When eis is added, it indicates the scale (or currency) used for estimating the value of an object. B. in classical literature logizesthai means to “deliberate, to conclude.” Esp. in Plato it is the typical term for the non-emotional thinking of the philosopher. . .” Kittel, Vol. 4 p. 284)

God uses the keeping of the ordinances of the law as the “scale for estimating the value” of circumcision. The uncircumcised man who keeps the law has the same value in the eyes of God as a circumcised man. This makes circumcision a morally neutral thing. It brought a child into covenant relationship with God, but if not followed with obedience it meant nothing. By the same token, the uncircumcised man who is drawn to keep the righteous ordinances of the law will be viewed by God as having the same value as the circumcised man. This may be what Peter finally understood at the home of Cornelius:

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

Again, let it be clearly understood that this is written to destroy the pride of the Jew, not to justify Gentiles who refused to be circumcised. Again, wait till Romans Four before drawing any concrete conclusions on the motive behind this revelation.

27 and shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature,

By “nature” all men are born uncircumcised. This is how God created them originally in the Garden of Eden.

“phusis... a. the nature of things, the force, laws, order, of nature; as opp. to what is monstrous, abnormal, perverse... that which is contrary to nature’s laws... b. birth, physical origin... c. a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature... d. the sum of innate properties and powers by which one person differs from others, distinctive native peculiarities, natural characteristics... “ (Thayer, p. 660; 5449)

There is no specific abomination about uncircumcision, it is the birth and physical origin of all males. Uncircumcision is the natural condition for men who have not been commanded or had no need to have their foreskin removed. It is not an indicator of the nature and condition of the heart. The Jews had placed circumcision on such a high pinnacle, that they evidently believed it purified the heart. Those who are uncircumcised are not monstrous or abnormal. They are naturally uncircumcised. Only the children of Abraham were commanded to be circumcised!

if it fulfil the law,

The term “if” is not in the Greek, but is placed there by the translators. Actually this is present active participle. It takes the action of this verb and makes it into the person who is doing it. It could have been translated “the keeping law one” or “the one fulfilling law.”

“teleo... 1. To bring to a close, to finish, to end... pass., passed, finished... 2. to perform execute, complete, fulfill, (so that the things done corresponds to what has been said, the order, command, etc.), i.e. a. with special reference to the subject-matter to carry out the contents of a command... b. with reference also to the form, to do just as commanded, and generally involving a notion of time, to perform the last act which completes a process, to accomplish, fulfill...” (Thayer p 619; 5055)

This is the one who brings to completion what the law was designed to do. “The things done correspond to what has been said.” These are uncircumcised men who are doing exactly what God intended and had in mind for the circumcised to be doing. They were accomplishing and fulfilling God’s intent and plan. Will not people like this completely turn the tables on the Jews? The self-righteous Jew refused to submit to God’s law, yet judged himself superior to others based on his own arbitrary and subjective reasoning. On the day of judgement God will call forth the people the condemned to

judge thee, who with the letter and circumcision art a transgressor of the law?

This judgment would be passed by the Gentile in a similar way to that spoken by Jesus:

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. Lk. 11:31-32

With all the advantages God had given them, they had failed. They had the letter(law of Moses), they had circumcision, they had received the wonderful privileges of great opportunity. Yet they had failed, while those with much less opportunity and privilege had succeeded. God now warns them in the strongest terms what the terrible nature of their dilemma will be on the day of judgement. All that they depended upon would be ripped away, and those with much less opportunity did what they refused to do. What excuse will they be able to offer when even with the letter(law) and circumcision they were transgressors of law, while others with few fewer blessings were actually keeping it? There is still one final blow, reserved for last.

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh:

All the blessings and privileges of the Jewish nation did nothing more than give to each person born into it the opportunity to be righteous. All the outward things that their birth into the covenant nation of Israel gave them did not make them a true Jew. Not even circumcision did it. They had to do that themselves. They had to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and mind, they had to unite all that they saw with faith, they had to be obedient to the laws God gave to them. Someone may have this “outwardly,” but it doesn’t mean anything by itself.

“phaneros... apparent, manifest, evident, known... to be plainly recognized or known...” (Thayer, p. 648; 5318)

Just because one has all the outer signs that make it “plainly recognized or known” that he is a Jew does not mean he is a Jew. They ought to have known this.

But Jehovah said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for (Jehovah seeth) not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart. 1Sam.16:7

It is not what strikes the eye from the outside, but what only God can see on the inside that is the true mark of a man.

29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart,

Though the law clearly taught this, the Jewish people of Jesus day missed it. John the Baptist was the first to deal with it.

He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy repentance, and begin

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. 9 And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Lk. 3:7-9

It was the fruits worthy of repentance that God wanted to see. It was never the fact that Abraham was their physical father. This too will be dealt with in Chapter Four. It was always the spiritual likeness to Abraham that made the difference, not the blood in their veins. A Jew is a Jew not exclusively because of who his father was, or that his flesh was circumcised, but because of what was “inward.”

“kruptos... hidden, concealed, secret... the inner part of man, the soul, 1 Pet 3:4...” (Thayer, p. 362; 2927)

Only God knew who the real Jews were. It was determined by what was in the “*hidden, concealed, secret*” part of man. It was in his heart. This was also true of circumcision. Both were given as signs of separation from the nations who did not know God. But the outward sign was meaningless unless the actual separation was in the heart. That is what God has always wanted. He will never settle for less.

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

in the spirit not in the letter;

Paul’s words in II Cor 3:2-3 help in understanding the meaning of this phrase.

Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; 3 being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables (that are) hearts of flesh. 2Cor. 3:2-3

God never intended that the ten commandments would only remain as letters on tablets of stone. He wanted the Jews to write it in their spirits on upon their hearts.

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart; 7 and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates. Deut. 6:6-9

This was the true Jew, one who had taken the laws of God and placed them on the inside to regulate his heart and spirit. He was in complete submission to God not just outwardly but inwardly. This is what Jesus sought to teach them in the sermon on the mount when he spoke of the sad misconceptions the Jewish teachers had when teaching the old law. They thought it was only outward. But it was not.

whose praise is not of men, but of God.

The desire within the heart of such a man is that God will “praise” them and not men.

“ep-ainos . . . approbation, commendation, praise...” (Thayer, p. 227; 1868).

The gaze of a true Jew and whose circumcision is in the heart seeks “*approbation, commendation and praise*” from God. What men think never really enters into the the heart except as a side issue. Jesus taught this very strongly in the Sermon on the Mount.

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

Those who ignored this were just hypocrites. They were not really even Jews except in name and outward appearance. God never accepted such people as being his. Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they were more interested in what men thought.

But all their works they do to be seen of men: for they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders (of their garments,) 6 and love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 and the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called of men, Rabbi. Mt. 23:5-7

At the end of Jesus' ministry the Holy Spirit, in the same manner as the concluding words to the Jews here gave as the main reason for their lack of response to Jesus, the need for praise from the wrong source. No true Jew would care about what men thought if they knew what God wanted them to do.

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. Jn. 12:42-43

Romans 3:1-20

Introduction:

Up to this point in the letter God has passed judgment on all first generation apostates (specifically the Gentiles) who leave God for idols and all the offspring (Rom 1:18-32) that would live after them. No one has a legitimate excuse since He is still visible through the things that are made. Not one of them will have a legitimate excuse for their ignorance and sinful behavior when the day of judgment arrives.

He then passed judgment on all those who agreed with God as they read the first chapter that those who practiced the things worthy of death should be punished. The problem centers on the principles involved. No one commits all sins and only a few commit them to their fullest degree. Even those who give themselves up to sexual immorality may still be honest or never become angry. Yet sin is sin and though the degree and types will differ from person to person, the truth is any condemnation of other sinners leaves us open to the same charge. They did indeed practice the same things hence they needed the gospel as badly as those in the first chapter. (2:1-16). They would not escape, because they thought so little of God's goodness, forbearance and love that should have led them to repentance and were actually treasuring up God's wrath. Finally, God passed judgment on the Jew who had so many blessings and opportunities yet had squandered all of them and ended up no better than the rest.

The inspired author moved to the final group of the human race: the Jew. He showed conclusively that those who had not yet obeyed the gospel, had squandered every advantage the call of Abraham and the giving of the Law had brought to them. Just as all the Gentiles were without excuse, for regardless of the time period from their ancestors fall, they still could have known. No Jew, regardless of where he lived and how far from the truth he is can stand before God and say that it was not his fault and he was guiltless.

In this chapter, one by one, all the rationalizations and excuses that had been made by the Jews were stripped from them. For those who thought that perhaps God just had not given them enough, he showed that they had been given advantages in every possible way! For those who thought that just maybe God had become unfaithful to them? He showed that this could never be! Even David saw that the reason he was in such anguish and terrible circumstances was his own sin, and that the anguish of his heart was the proof that God was righteous and would be vindicated in all that was written in the law. Those Jews who held to the idea that somehow their wicked conduct made God look good and therefore God would not really punish them for it is shown to be complete folly though using their own hatred of Paul as an illustration. After ripping all rationalizations away, the final point of the section is that even the law and the prophets taught what Paul was telling them. There was only one hope for them. They must obey the gospel before it is too late.

1 What advantage then hath the Jew?

The Spirit asked this question to challenge the Jew and all those who might be drawing improper conclusion from what has been previously been said. Nothing in this book is written to speak evil or lessen God's gracious kindness in calling Abraham and making of Israel a great nation. Though the sad reality existed that the Jew was no better than the Gentile, it was not because they did not have great privileges. One might think after reading the previous chapter that this was not the case. With the term "*then*" the Spirit made it clear that this question was designed to deal with these previous thoughts.

"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)

God knows the mind of men and he knows where they will be led by His word. He knows the best possible means of breaking down the stubborn and rebellious heart. Thus the question drawn as a conclusion from the previous chapter. Is there any "*advantage*" to being a Jew?

“perissos... exceeding some number or measure or rank or need; 1. over and above, more than is necessary, superadded... 2. superior, extraordinary, surpassing, uncommon... pre-eminence, superiority, advantage, ... more eminent, more remarkable...” (Thayer, p. 505-506; 4055).

Is there any advantage about God’s calling Abraham out of Ur and making of him a great nation? Is there any benefit about God’s giving this great nation the Law? Did any of this bring pre-eminence, superiority and advantage? Is there anything about being a Jew which placed him in the position of excelling in rank, that makes him over and above, that gives him superiority? Before answering this first question he gives another one of the same quality.

or what is the profit of circumcision?

It was made very clear that circumcision brought one into a covenant with God. Was there any “profit” to being circumcised and entering into this covenant.

“opheleia... usefulness, advantage, profit...” (Thayer p 683; 5622)

Was being in covenant with God useful? Did it help Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David? Was there any advantage and profit for those who entered into covenant with God and kept it?

2 Much every way:

Paul uses the term “much” to express the weight, measure or force which the advantage or profit of being a Jew conveys.

“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)

Whether one looks at the force, the intensity or the size and measure of these advantages, they were *“great, strong, intense and large.”* The *pre-eminence* and *superiority* of the Jews was beyond comprehension. Just because the people who were called were unworthy and seldom reaped the great benefits the Covenant had the potential to bring them, one must not underestimate the immense value of what God had promised and fulfilled to them. Consider some of the promises God had made to them if they would be faithful and keep their side of the covenant.

If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; 4 then I will give your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. 5 And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. 6 And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. 7 And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. 8 And five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand; and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. 9 And I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and will establish my covenant with you. 10 And ye shall eat old store long kept, and ye shall bring forth the old because of the new. 11 And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. 12 And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. Lev. 26:3-12

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

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to observe to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that Jehovah thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth: 2 and all these blessings shall come upon thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God. 3 Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and

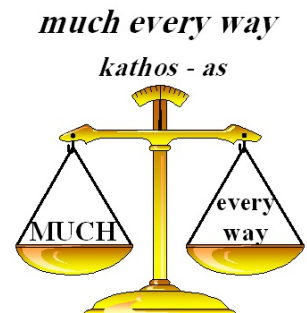
blessed shalt thou be in the field. 4 Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy beasts, the increase of thy cattle, and the young of thy flock. 5 Blessed shall be thy basket and thy kneading-trough. 6 Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. 7 Jehovah will cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thee: they shall come out against thee one way, and shall flee before thee seven ways. 8 Jehovah will command the blessing upon thee in thy barns, and in all that thou puttest thy hand unto; and he will bless thee in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee. 9 Jehovah will establish thee for a holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee; if thou shalt keep the commandments of Jehovah thy God, and walk in his ways. 10 And all the peoples of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of Jehovah; and they shall be afraid of thee. 11 And Jehovah will make thee plenteous for good, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which Jehovah sware unto thy fathers to give thee. 12 Jehovah will open unto thee his good treasure the heavens, to give the rain of thy land in its season, and to bless all the work of thy hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. 13 And Jehovah will make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if thou shalt hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do (them), 14 and shalt not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them. Deut. 28:1-14

If the Jews had been faithful to God, they would have had advantages above and beyond anything that could be imagined. God gave them many precious and exceeding great promises. But they rebelled and never reached what God wanted to do for them. Their unfaithfulness reflected upon God because he could not bless them as he had promised. The closest they came were the times under David and Solomon. How much different the Biblical writings in the Prophets would have been if the Jews had obeyed and been faithful. God laid out the blessings and the curses. They chose to be cursed and this is the state they were in when Romans was written. Yet God wants it known that as far as the degree and measure of the advantages they had been given as Jews it was “*much in every way!*”

The precision with which this expression is uttered in the Greek language is hard to replicate in English. Our translators have given us “*great in every respect,*” (NAS,) “*much in every way*”(NIV, NKJ) and “*much every way.*” (KJV, ASV). It is the term “*in*” that is difficult to translate into English. It is the word for proportion, relation, and degree.

“*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 best way to picture this word is the exact balancing point in a set of scales, or the equal sign in math. God bids us place “*every*” (“*pas*,... a. *any, every one (...of the class denoted by the noun...)*... *all or any of the class indicated...* b. *any and every, of every kind*) on one side of the scales and “*much*” advantage on the other. Every aspect of being a Jew had intense and powerful advantages. Everything God had revealed and asked them to do was for their good always:



And Jehovah commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear Jehovah our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as at this day. 25 And it shall be righteousness unto us, if we observe to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, as he hath commanded us. Deut. 6:24-25

Add it up any way you want to. Ponder it from any perspective. Every command, every ordinance, every aspect of their life and worship had intense advantage and benefit to them if they had done it. Every aspect of the “*way*” God had asked them to live under the law would have benefitted them if they had done it.

“*tropos*... 1. *a manner, way, fashion... as, even as, like as, ...* 2. *manner of life, character... turn of mind...*” (Thayer, p. 631; 5158).

The character, manner of life, mind set, and way that God had planned for the Jews to live would have been of great and awesome value. God would have blessed and honored them above all lands. They would have found that all of God's commands gave greater value and joy to their lives. They would have been mighty and invincible. God reveals some of this when speaking of what the emptiness of the Gentile life prior to the coming of Christ.

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

This is what they Jews had, and it all centered on one pivotal point:

first of all, that they were intrusted with the oracles of God.

The ambiguity of the term "*first*" leads to one of two conclusions.

"protos... first; 1. either in time or place, in any succession of things or of persons... 2. first in rank, influence, honor; chief; principal..." (Thayer, p. 554-555; 4412-4413)

Either the Spirit is affirming that the "*first in any succession of things*" about being a Jew is that they were entrusted with the oracles of God, or he is saying "*first in rank, influence, and honor*" and the "*chief reason*" why they had much advantage in every aspect of their life. The KJV and NKJV use "*chiefly*" while the ASV, NASB and NIV use "**first**." The ESV uses "*to begin with*" The addition of the particle "*men*" seems to weight this more to the KJV, NKJV translation.

"men,...a weakened form of mēn, and hence properly a particle of affirmation: truly, certainly, surely, indeed-- its affirmative force being weakened, yet retained... Owing to this its original meaning it adds a certain force to the terms and phrases with which it is connected, and thus contrasts them with or distinguishes them from others...." (Thayer, p. 397-398).

As Thayer notes, "*it adds a certain force to the term it is connected*" and "*distinguishes them from others.*" Added to this is the fact that there is no second or third thing to add to the "first of all" and it seems clear that this is the chief advantage and the greatest honor bestowed upon the Jews. No one can deny that all their blessing would have flowed from keeping it, and that all their curses came because they did not. God's "*entrusting*" them with his oracles was the greatest advantage to being a Jew.

"pisteuo... to put confidence in one, to trust one... 2. transitively... to intrust a thing to one, i.e. to his fidelity... to be intrusted with a thing..." (Thayer, p. 511-512; 4100)

God put confidence in them by bestowing upon them the honor of holding his "*oracles.*"

"logion... properly, a little word...a brief utterance, in prof. auth. a divine oracle(doubtless because oracles were generally brief)... in Sept. For ... the breast-plate of the high priest, which he wore when he consulted Jehovah,... but chiefly for... any utterance of God, whether precept or promise... In the NT spoken of the words or utterances of God: of the contents of the Mosaic law, Acts 7:38; . . . and his Messianic promises, Rom 3:2..." (Thayer p 379; 3051)

They had God's revealed word. They knew the truth about how he created the heavens and the earth, they knew the truth about the flood, about the nations, and about God's expectations and promises. They also had been taken into God's confidence about the future of the race through the Messiah.

We might illustrate it with a man who gives someone a map to a magnificent treasure. They would have advantages in every way over those who had no means of even knowing about a treasure, let alone where it might lie. God gave them a map of how to please him and chart a course through the difficulties and dilemmas of life, coming out of it all happy and successful. God gave them advantages in marriage, raising children, business relationships, and friendships. He offered them wisdom, prosperity and peace. This is what the possession of the oracles of God brought to them. It is the greatest advantage God ever gave.

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

3 For what if some were without faith?

While the previous verse presented the potential God had given the Jews, this one reveals the reality. "Some" were without faith.

"tis... indefinite(enclitic) pronoun... 1. a certain, a certain one; used of persons and things concerning which the writer either cannot or will not speak more particularly... 2. a. joined to nouns and signifying some... Plural *tines* some(of that number or class of men indicated by the context)." (Thayer, p. 625; 5100)

This is an important term because it intimates a righteous remnant. Paul will deal with this in more detail in the Ninth chapter. "For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel." All the while that God was punishing some (even though they were always the majority) it was always because of their lack of faith. Though God had promised to bless them if they trusted him, some were "without faith."

"apisteo... 1. To betray a trust, be unfaithful... 2. to have no belief, disbelieve..." (Thayer, P. 57; 569)

God had warned them over and over again in the law itself that if they were unfaithful he would punish and curse them.

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. 16 Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. 17 Cursed shall be thy basket and thy kneading-trough. 18 Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, the increase of thy cattle, and the young of thy flock. 19 Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. 20 Jehovah will send upon thee cursing, discomfiture, and rebuke, in all that thou puttest thy hand unto to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the evil of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. Deut. 28:15-20

If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, JEHOVAH THY GOD; 59 then Jehovah will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance. 60 And he will bring upon thee again all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee. 61 Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will Jehovah bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed. 62 And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou didst not hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God. 63 And it shall come to pass, that, as Jehovah rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you, so Jehovah will rejoice over you to cause you to perish, and to destroy you; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest in to possess it. 64 And Jehovah will scatter thee among all peoples, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers, even wood and stone. 65 And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, and there shall be no rest for the sole of thy foot: but Jehovah will give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and pining of soul; 66 and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear night and day, and shalt have no assurance of thy life. Deut. 28:58-66

Does the fact that "some" were unfaithful and brought upon themselves all the terrible curses in the law reflect in any way on God's faithfulness? How could God be charged with that? All through the wanderings in the wilderness, all through the times of Judges and Kings, the children of Israel betrayed their trust by being unfaithful, and God was always faithful by testifying against them through their judges and prophets.

The first four chapters of Hebrews are designed to reveal that what happened in the wilderness was not due to God's unfaithfulness, but to theirs. After they violated the covenant again and again and manifested their complete lack of respect, fear, love and regard to God, he finally swore in his wrath that because of their persistent unfaithfulness, none of them would enter into his rest.

Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye shall hear his voice, 8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, Like as in the day of the trial in the wilderness, 9 Where your fathers tried (me) by proving (me,) And saw my works forty years. 10 Wherefore I was displeased with this generation, And said, They do always err in their heart: But they did not know my ways; 11 As I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. 12 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 Today; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: 14 for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end: Heb. 3:7-14

Yet they did not learn their lesson. But fell away again and again until finally with Assyria and Babylon, God manifested his faithfulness by punishing their unfaithfulness.

And it was so, because the children of Israel had sinned against Jehovah their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, 8 and walked in the statutes of the nations, whom Jehovah cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they made. 9 And the children of Israel did secretly things that were not right against Jehovah their God: and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city; 10 and they set them up pillars and Asherim upon every high hill, and under every green tree; 11 and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the nations whom Jehovah carried away before them; and they wrought wicked things to provoke Jehovah to anger; 12 and they served idols, whereof Jehovah had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. 13 Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. 14 Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their neck, like to the neck of their fathers, who believed not in Jehovah their God. 15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified unto them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and (went) after the nations that were round about them, concerning whom Jehovah had charged them that they should not do like them. 16 And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. 17 And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger. 18 Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. 19 Also Judah kept not the commandments of Jehovah their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. 20 And Jehovah rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. II Kings 17:7-20

All the above validated God's faithfulness. He did everything he could to help the Jews.

shall their want of faith make of none effect the faithfulness of God?

Can we possibly conclude that because "some" were unfaithful and brought all the curses of the law upon themselves that this reflected in any way upon God's faithfulness? All that was revealed in the last part of Chapter Two about the Jews can about because of their "want of faith" (*apistia*-have no belief... betray a trust, be unfaithful...). What impact does this have on the "faithfulness" of God?

"pistis... faith; i.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... 2. fidelity, faithfulness, .i.e the character of one who can be relied on..." (Thayer, p. 512-414;

After hundreds of years of being under the law, the Jew had not benefitted because of their lack of faith and betrayal of God. Most of them were no better off than the Gentiles. Did this mean

anything about God's fidelity and faithfulness? Did this outcome have any effect on "the character of one who can be relied upon?" Can one find anything in the history of the Jewish people that reflected on God's fidelity and faithfulness? Does the fact that the Jews were so unfaithful that God had to curse and punish them mean that all his promised blessings were just empty promises? Does their unfaithfulness and lack of integrity take God's reliability and fidelity and make it of "no effect?"

"katargeo... 1. to render idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative: ...to deprive of its strength, make barren... to cause a person or thing to have no further efficiency; to deprive of force, influence, power, [A.V. bring to nought, make of none effect]... 2. to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish..." (Thayer, p. 336; 2673)

"argos (= a-ergos, ...) means "inactive," or "inoperative." It is used in the sense of "incapable of action"... katargeo... trans. In the sense of "to render inactive," to condemn to inactivity"... In the religious sense, which is almost exclusive to Paul, it means 1. "To make completely inoperative" or "to put out of use." ... " (Kittel Vol 1 p. 452-454)

This is a compound word. The root is the word work and effort with the alpha privative to negate it. Then there is the word para that intensifies it. Did the lack of faith on the part of some in Israel "deprive of strength," God's faithfulness? Did it make God's faithfulness "inactive" or "inoperative?" Should it be concluded that God never intended to give the Jews the great honor and blessings he had promised? The Spirit of God is going to give a resounding NO to this question, but before moving to that it is wise to ponder the implications of this question.

Both the Jewish nation and the church are divine institutions created to give freewill human beings the opportunity to receive blessings from God. Neither of them are fixed because man has the right to choose. If the Jews had chosen to be faithful to God they would have been the greatest nation on earth.

I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. 11 But my people hearkened not to my voice; and Israel would none of me. 12 So I let them go after the stubbornness of their heart, that they might walk in their own counsels. 13 Oh that my people would hearken unto me, that Israel would walk in my ways! 14 I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn my hand against their adversaries. Ps 81:10-14

Though some did choose that, the majority chose to rebel. Their rebellion brought about God's curses. The reality is that those who are faithful are blessed and manifest God's faithfulness and those who are unfaithful are cursed and also reveal God's faithfulness. He promised to bless the obedient and curse the disobedient and that is exactly what he did.

But when God was forced to curse his people because of their disobedience it put God in a bad light to others. Twice Moses spoke of this when God threatened to destroy the entire nation because of their wickedness.

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. 11 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. Ex. 32:9-14 9

And Jehovah said unto Moses, How long will this people despise me? and how long will they not believe in me, for all the signs which I have wrought among them? 12 I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a nation greater and mightier than they. 13 And Moses said unto Jehovah, Then the Egyptians will hear it; for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them; 14 and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that thou Jehovah art in the midst of this people; for thou Jehovah art seen face to face, and thy cloud standeth over them, and thou goest before them, in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night. 15 Now if thou shalt kill this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, 16 Because Jehovah was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto

them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. Num. 14:11-16

God's character was maligned or praised based upon the conduct of those who have been blessed with the right to be his children. But though the casual observer might conclude that God is being unfaithful when he brings wrath upon the wicked who were once his people, it is not true. Since the beginning, God has punished those who did evil and blessed those who did what was right. Many misunderstand this, but it is no reflection on God, only an indication of ignorance on the part of the one making such a judgement.

One final point. Remember that those Jews who are here being addressed are those living when their own Savior was crucified. They were the ones who saw the miracles of the apostles and heard the testimony of the prophets yet remained dull of hearing and refused to repent. This section reveals to us the reasons they were clinging to.

4 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!!!!**" which was as emphatic a statement of repudiation that existed in the Greek language. One of the grammatical points cannot be relayed into the English. The optative mood in Greek is used to express wishes or doubtful contingencies.

The optative is the mood of strong contingency; the mood of *possibility*. It contains no definite anticipation of realization, but merely presents the action as conceivable. Hence it is one step farther removed from reality than the subjunctive. (Dana and Mantey; Manual Grammar of the Greek NT p. 172).

There is not even the slightest chance that this could ever be. By putting it in the optative, the Holy Spirit denied even the *possibility!* Although the action is conceivable, the negation makes it inconceivable. Such a thing is not possible! Since this was a strong Greek idiom, the translators felt the need to intensify by using an idiom common for that time. "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.

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: Heb. 6:17-18

if we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself. 2Tim 2:13

yea let God be found true and every man a liar.

There are many ways that this truth has been set forth and illustrated in the Scripture. Many have sought to argue with God and drawn conclusions against Him. Job said many harsh words which God summed up as "words without knowledge," later accusing him of trying to "annul his judgment" and seeking to "condemn me that you may be justified." The Psalmist had concluded that God was not fair, but after pondering it more fully concluded that it would have been treacherous for him to speak what he had thought. The Jews in the days of Ezekiel accused God of not being equal and fair in his dealings.

Who is this that darkeneth counsel By words without knowledge? Job 38:2

Wilt thou even annul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be justified? Job 40:8

If I had said, I will speak thus; behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of thy children. Ps. 73:15

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? Ezek. 18:25

Every time such people had the opportunity to speak with God they found that they were wrong and God was right. Any time man contradicts God or seeks to justify himself by condemning God, this will be the case. God never lies, he never gives anything but good gifts, and he is full of love.

in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal; Titus 1:3

Be not deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 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 1:16-17

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 1Jn. 4:8

He always has our best interests at heart and always tells the truth. He should always be viewed as a good giver of perfect gifts. Whenever a situation arises where we have to make a choice between what men say and what God says then let God be true, and view everyone else as a liar.

Every word of God is tried: He is a shield unto them that take refuge in him. 6 Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. Pr. 30:5-6

as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy words, And mightest prevail when thou comest into judgment.

This quotation comes from Ps 51 which many attribute to David after being convicted of sin by Nathan, but there is no proof and it would therefore be true of all sinners who sought true repentance. Any sinner will be found to be the liar. But we can use David as the type of all sinners. David, he had refused to admit it for months, but after being convicted of his sin, he admitted that he too knew his transgression and admitted that he had sinned against God and done what is evil in his sight.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight; that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Ps. 51:2-4

Once this was brought to his attention, not only did David not attempt to avoid the consequences and cast the blame elsewhere, but he admitted that he had transgressed and sinned. David honored God and remained faithful to Him by confessing that God was always justified in his words and would always prevail when he came into judgement with man. David tried for a time to hide and not admit it, but forgiveness did not come until he did.

When I kept silence, my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long. 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: My moisture was changed (as) with the drought of summer. (Selah) 5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity did I not hide: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Jehovah; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Ps. 32:3-5

God was “justified” in his words. He is a righteous God and his words are also righteous. When all the facts are known, God will always be right.

“dikaioo... 1. prop to make dikaios; to render righteous or such as he ought to be... 2. to show, exhibit, evince, one to be righteous, such as he is and wishes himself to be considered... 3. tina, to declare, pronounce, one to be just, righteous, or such as he ought to be,... a. with the negative idea predominant, to declare guiltless one accused or who may be accused, acquit of a charge or reproach, ...b. with the positive idea predominant, to judge, declare, pronounce, righteous and therefore acceptable,...” (Thayer, p. 150; 1344)

Because of this, God will always “prevail” when he comes in judgment.

“nikao... to conquer... a. to carry off the victory, to come off victorious... when one is arraigned or goes to law, to win the case, maintain one’s cause...” (Thayer p. 425; 3528)

This upholds and makes clear that the absolute standard of right rests within God. No one can wrest it from him for two important reasons. First, but secondary to the argument here is that God is the potter. He has the power to enforce all things and no man can annul his judgment. But much more importantly is that God is always right! God is fair and just and when all the facts are set forth everyone will freely admit that God was in the right.

It is obviously best to do this before the judgment day as David did instead of waiting as these Jews intended to do until they can no longer fix it. Because of the absolute righteousness of God’s word, no one will withstand his wisdom or his justice. He will always *“win the case”* against us because he is always right. As David, it is best for us to admit this and confess our sins.

Yet just as David did not see this right away, and only saw it after Nathan came and convicted him with the parable about the rich man and the neighbor’s lamb, so might it be with these men as well. Few Jews could miss the power of this event. It would be difficult for them not to feel a tinge of conscience as they realized they were doing exactly the same thing with Jesus that David had done until Nathan came. Perhaps Paul is God’s Nathan to the Jews at this time.

5 But if our unrighteousness commendeth the righteousness of God, what shall we say?

The question is not nearly as difficult to understand as the specific act of unrighteousness being considered and the motivation for asking it. If the theme of the section is being maintained, then this is a question designed to put the Jew under sin and take away all excuses. From Paul’s words in 3:7-8, it is also evident that he was speaking to those who knew the terrible accusations that have been leveled against Paul and the bitter attitude in which he was held by the Jews. They were calling the gospel *“Paul’s lie,”* and slanderously affirming that Paul believed and taught that one could do evil that good may come. He then concluded the section with the logical *“oun”* where something follows necessarily and states that the only logical conclusion to all this reasoning is that the Jews are in fact no better than the Gentiles and that even the law verified it.

The argument they were putting forth which they had either come to believe through the long years, or had recently entered their mind as they heard the gospel preached to others was that if the gospel truly were from God then their own wickedness and ungodliness *“commended”* God’s own righteousness. So even if the gospel were true there would be no reason for them to obey it. It would be better for them to remain rebellious as it would put God in a better light *“commending”* it.

“sun-histemi... 1. to place together, to set in the same place, to bring or band together... w. to set one with another i.e. by way of presenting or introducing him, i.e. to commend... 3. to put together by way of composition or combination, to teach by combining and comparing, hence to show, prove, establish, exhibit...” (Thayer p 605; 4921)

Paul will use this term later in Romans to describe how God was *“commending”* his love to us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us(5:8), and in commending of Phoebe as a good Christian servant to the saints in Rome(16:1).

Just as Jesus’ death on the cross *commended* (proved conclusively through demonstration) how much God loved sinners and just as Paul words of praise proved the faithfulness and value of Phoebe, so also the wickedness of the Jews sets forth God’s integrity and righteousness. Man’s unrighteous deeds *“set forth, prove, establish and exhibit”* God’s righteousness.

The reasoning is simple. When others fail, those who succeed look good. Since all have sinned, it shows how difficult it is to be righteous and thus proves what a wonderful and mighty God we serve! Since nothing more vividly and powerfully manifests the greatness of another than to see all the failures in another, man’s unrighteousness shows how great God’s righteousness really is. Most reading this today see clearly what a bankrupt excuse it is, but evidently at that time it must have swayed enough that God felt it needed to be dealt with.

Though it might be granted that this was one of the sad results of man’s rebellion, God never

wanted man to sin so he could appear righteous. There were other more pleasant ways for God to manifest His righteousness than by casting countless billions into the agony of hell. Besides, God doesn't want anyone to be tempted with evil, takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and wants all to be saved.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: 14 but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. James 1:13-14

Is God unrighteous who visiteth with wrath? (I speak after the manner of men.)

This is the "illogical" conclusion that must follow their illogical statement. To be certain no one ever thought it was Paul's conclusion, the Holy Spirit placed "*I speak after the manner of men*" in the verse. "*After the manner*" is the term "*kata*" Paul used to affirm he was speaking according to man's wisdom and reasoning and not by inspiration. He spoke "*according to*" or "*in proportion to*" the thinking and reasoning of men.

The question is simple. If man's sin makes God look good then wouldn't it be wrong for God to punish those who did it? Wouldn't it be unrighteous for God to "*visit*" with wrath?

epi-phero... 1. To bring upon, bring forward... 2. to lay upon, to inflict, ... 3. To bring upon, i.e. in addition to, to add, increase... 4. To put upon, cast upon, impose... (Thayer p. 246; 2018)

From the beginning in the garden of Eden right up to the words in this epistle, God had made it very clear that he would "*lay upon*" and "*inflict*" wrath upon all who violated his commands. Every time it had occurred, God had responded in the same way. He always "*brought about*" punishment. At the flood he destroyed all men, at the tower of Babel he scattered them and confounded their language. He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and made an example to all who live after them. God punished Egypt, the seven nations of Canaan, Israel and Judah and all other nations who committed wicked acts. If the above reasoning were true then God was unrighteous when he did them. It was not right for him to punish man for doing something that made him look good and glorified him. This would mean that God was unrighteous every time he punished man for unrighteousness. It would nullify everything in Scripture. What proves too much proves nothing! This is why it is after the manner of men. It is false to the core.

6. (God forbid(may it never be!)

Absolutely not, may that thought never even enter your mind for an instant in any plausible manner. It is a flawed conclusion out of harmony with the facts and the truth.

for then how shall God judge the world?

If this excuse were true, then how would God be able to judge the world? Ponder the following illustration.

A lawyer could attempt to clear his client accused of murder by using the same type of reasoning. As we enter the courtroom he is giving his final words to the judge and jury. "My client is definitely guilty, he did murder that child, but before we condemn him to death, let us examine all the good that came out of his act. He has proven our police force to be of the highest caliber for they caught him. He has proven that the laws of our land are good in condemning such acts. He has shown that the nation is outstanding in its ability to offer a fair trial to those accused of wrong doing. He has given you an opportunity to sit on a jury and watch the criminal justice system work. He has certainly accomplished many good things as a result of this crime. It is my contention that since so many good things have come from this act, that he ought to go unpunished for it." What will any sane jury do with such arguments? Certainly good things might come from a wicked and heinous act, but that does not justify the crime or those who commit them. The murderer must be executed no matter how much good comes from his act.

This is the case with all sinners. There might be some good thing that came from their evil doing, but that doesn't justify their conduct. They will be condemned for their sins no matter how much they bring to light of God's longsuffering, mercy, and righteousness. God's justice demands that

the guilty be punished. Those who were justifying themselves on this basis would not escape.

7 But if the truth of God through my lie abounded unto his glory,

This is an example of the type of reviling the apostles endured as they preached the gospel to the Jews. Not only were they trying to kill him, and persecuting him from city to city, they were attempting to slander the message Paul was preaching. Jesus had warned that this would be the case.

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you (from their company), and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap (for joy) for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same manner did their fathers unto the prophets. Luke 6:22-23

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. 1Cor. 4:9-13

Paul was not complaining about the treatment, the Spirit was using the way the apostles had been slandered to:

Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own conceit. Pr. 26:5

If the Jews want to use the above to excuse their own conduct, they must realize that it also justified Paul. Since the Jews viewed Paul as a man who was unfit to live for betraying his nation, religion and God(in their eyes). Yet according to the logic used above, Paul would be made into the best of men. His lie(about Jesus being God's son) will abound to God's glory just as the Jews sins did for them! Paul's lie made God's truth look better, so (by their reasoning) Paul was actually glorifying God through his lie.

This is where their reasoning led, and the Holy Spirit forced them to deal with it. Is that what you Jews want? Would you hold a position in which you are forced to conclude that Paul is a better person than all of you? By your own judgment, Paul glorified God more than all of you do. If you want to accept that premise, then:

why am I also still judged as a sinner?

Why do you consider me as a sinner? Why don't you open your arms and pat me on the back because through what I have done I have really glorified God. Is that what you want? Is that really the kind of reasoning you want to have?

8 and why not (as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil, that good may come?

If that isn't enough to drive home the folly of the above reasoning, then take it to its final conclusion. Stretch it as far as it will go, right to its very limit. If one affirms that the more wicked and sinful one is the more glory and honor is given to God, then why not just sin all the time? Why not just go out and see how much sin can be accumulated to truly honor him? It will show him to be more longsuffering because he doesn't destroy us in the act of doing them, and it shows him to be more righteous because he would never do thing like that.

Such talk makes one sick to even think about, but in order to make people see sometimes the true stench of what they are affirming must be brought into their nostrils. Yet even as he spoke it he protected himself by stating that it was slandering him to state that he had ever affirmed this. Evidently the Jews had used this to combat the gospel. They accused the apostles and prophets of preaching a gospel that allowed people to do evil so that good might come of it. This is not what the gospel taught, and anyone who affirmed that it did was "slandering" those inspired by the Holy Spirit.

“blasphemeo... to speak reproachfully, rail at, revile, calumniate ... Passive ... to be evil spoken of, reviled, railed at... Spec. of those who by contemptuous speech intentionally come short of the reverence due to God or to sacred things...” (Thayer, p. 102; 987)

It was an evil reviling of the apostles. It was not what the gospel taught. Those who said such things are simply making up lies to slander and revile the gospel, and the Holy Spirit clearly revealed here that they would be rightly condemned for it.

whose condemnation is just.

Those who reason like this will be rightfully “condemned.”

“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)

Anyone who affirmed that anything evil could be done because of some good thing that might result from it would be justly condemned on the day of judgment. God would pass a sentence of condemnation upon everyone who has ever thought it, said it, or tried it.

9 What then? are we better than they?

What conclusions should now be drawn? He uses “*oun...* a conj. indicating that something follows from another necessarily”) to bridge the sections. He concluded at the end of the first chapter that the Gentiles fell short of God’s glory and God’s wrath was revealed against them. They practiced things worthy of death and consented with others who did the same. Now, the Jew had been given the law to keep them from that fate. They were shown what the things worthy of death were. Were the Jews any “*better*” than the Gentiles when all their excuses were weighed in and their actual conduct assessed?

“pro-echo... to have before or in advance of another, to have pre-eminence over another, to excel, to surpass... middle to excel to one’s advantage ... to surpass in excellences which can be passed to one’s credit: Rom 3:9...” (Thayer p 539; 4284)

Though the Spirit used a slightly different word in verse one, the thought is very similar. After all the excuses they have made are examined, and all the advantages they were given were squandered and wasted, did the Jew have any “pre-eminence” over the Gentile? Did they “excel” or “surpass” them? We “we” (Paul and all other Jews) any better than the Gentiles? Do we have any pre-eminence over them, do we excel and surpass them morally? Are we in any less need for grace and mercy?

No, in no wise:

The sad answer from God is no. In no possible way are the Jews any better than the Gentiles. The term “in no wise” removes any hope.

“pantos... (from pas) ... a. in any and every way, by all means... b. doubtless, surely, certainly... with the negative ou, in no wise, not at all...” (Thayer p. 476; 3843)

In positive statements the term used means “*any and every,*” and in negative statements “*not at all!*” There was not a single thing any Jew at that time could put forth as something in which they were better off than the Gentiles.

for we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin;

The Spirit introduced this statement with the term “*gar* - by the use of this particle, either the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added, or some previous declaration is explained.” The Spirit now testified that the results of all that has been said is that there is not a man or woman who has ever lived (Jew or Gentile) who could read up to this point in the book and not find the grounds for their own condemnation. We “*before laid to the charge*” is the way the book up to this point is summed up. This is a single Greek term:

“pro-aitiaomai... To bring a charge against previously...” (Thayer p. 537; 4256)

All the charges against the Gentiles(1:18-32) and against the morally upright and the Jews(2-3), had led to one destination. They are all under sin. Sin had mastered them and they were within its grasp. With crushing weight, Scripture after Scripture out of the Law will now be quoted to prove that the Jews were all under sin. The Jews knew these were written about them. As Nathan did to David so long ago, the Spirit now used Paul to do to them. Truly, *“Thou art the man.”* (II Sam 12:7)

10 as it is written,

The Holy Spirit now selects some passages out of the Old Covenant and applies them to all the Jews that lived prior to or after the writing. These passages are all taken from the Psalms and Isaiah.

There is none righteous, no, not one;

This quote comes from Ps 14:1-3 and Ps. 53:1-3, which are identical

The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good. 2 Jehovah looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek after God. 3 They are all gone aside; they are together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Ps. 14:1-3; Ps 53:1-3

As God assessed men a universal conclusion had been formed. There had not been even one single man on the earth that had truly understood their role and position in life. There was not a single righteous man. Not one! No one had perfectly lived up to his duty and obligations to God and man. Not one righteous man ever graced the earth. What a bleak and sad world it would have been if God had not chosen to intervene.

11 There is none that understandeth, There is none that seeketh after God;

Both Paul and David speaking as the Spirit moved were speaking absolutely. Many have sought God and sought to understand God, none had succeeded well enough to be considered righteous or good. None ever truly understood and sought with their whole, heart, soul and mind as they could and should have.

12 They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; There is none that doeth good, no, not, so much as one:

All began as children pure and innocent, but all turned aside after the fashion of Romans 7:7-11. “Turned aside” is defined:

“ekklino...to turn aside, deviate (from the right way and course, Mal 2:8...)... to turn (one’s self) away...APO with en. Of pers. To turn away from, keep aloof from, one’s society; to shun one: Rom. 16:17... (Thayer, p. 196; 1578)

God had revealed the right path, but no one would walk it. They all turned aside and deviated from that course. All had become “unprofitable.”

“achreioo,... to make useless, render unserviceable: of character, Rom 3:12...” (Thayer p 91; 889)

All have made themselves useless to God. He cannot save them because they have made themselves filthy by deviating from the right path. They have filled themselves with the knowledge which comes only by experiencing and enjoying evil. They were useless. None of them can accomplish good in the total sense of the term. None have ever lived a life of pure goodness. Not even one. Not when the Psalm was written and not now when Romans was written.

13 Their throat is an open sepulchre;

*8 Lead me, O Jehovah, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face. 9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; **their throat is an open sepulchre**; they flatter with their tongue. 10 Hold them guilty, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; thrust them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee. Ps 5:8-10*

Does this verse refer to the odor, or to the place all who listen to their words will end up? Certainly either could be true. The odors of an open grave proceed from the throat of men. When God sees the things coming out of the mouths of even those under the Law, it smells to him much like an open grave does to us. They are as offensive to God as this is to us. On the other hand it may tie in more directly with the next two clauses and refer to the deceit and poison in their mouths that leads all who listen to them to death.

With their tongues they have used deceit:

Men are deceitful, they do not say exactly what they mean, and they temper what they mean to the ears of those who are listening. God only speaks truth at all times. No one reading this verse with an open heart and tender conscience will remain unmoved

The poison of asps is under their lips:

*Deliver me, O Jehovah, from the evil man; preserve me from the violent man: 2 Who devise mischiefs in their heart; continually do they gather themselves together for war. 3 They have sharpened their tongue like a serpent; **Adders' poison is under their lips.** (Selah) 4 Keep me, O Jehovah, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man: who have purposed to thrust aside my steps. Ps 140:1-4*

An asp is:

“aspis... an asp, a small and most venomous serpent, the bite of which is fatal unless the part bitten be immediately cut away: Rom 3:13.” (Thayer p 81)

This is God’s judgment passed upon the words of even his chosen people over the years. With their words they can be as fatal as a most poisonous serpent.

14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

*3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and the covetous renounceth, (yea), contemneth Jehovah. 4 The wicked, in the pride of his countenance, (saith), He will not require (it). All his thoughts are, there is no God. 5 His ways are firm at all times; Thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his adversaries, he puffeth at them. 6 He saith in his heart, I shall not be moved; to all generations I shall not be in adversity. 7 **His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression: under his tongue is mischief and iniquity.** Ps 10:3-7*

Their own law also condemned “cursing:” and “bitterness” coming out of their mouths.

“ara... 2. An imprecation, curse, malediction.” (Thayer p 71; 685)

“pikria... bitterness:... bitter gall l. q. extreme wickedness,... a bitter root and so producing bitter fruit...of speech, Rom 3:14...” Thayer p 509; 4088)

People who have the capacity to allow the vile corruption which is already in their heart to come out of their mouth.

15 Their feet are swift to shed blood;

The quotations in Romans 3:15-17 come from Isaiah 59:4-8 where Isaiah was indicting the Jews for their wickedness.

*None sueth in righteousness, and none pleadeth in truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. 5 They hatch adders' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth; and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. 6 Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. 7 **Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; desolation and destruction are in their paths.** 8 **The way of peace they know not;** and there is no justice in their goings: they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein doth not know peace. Isa 59:4-8*

The Jews with Moses(Numbers 14:10), David with Uriah(I Sam 11:14-15), and the Jewish high court with Jesus(John 11:47-50) are good examples of how swift the Jews were to shed blood when it was to their advantage.

16 Destruction and misery are in their ways;

These are strong words of indictment that God used here. Were they intended for all men or just a despicable few? From the context, it does apply to all those under the law, but not to everyone in equal degree. Yet as Jesus showed in the Sermon on the Mount, even within the heart such things defile and make man guilty. At one time or another in the lives of men, multitudes have at least wished destruction and misery on others.

“suntrimma...1. that which is broken or shattered, a fracture... of a broken limb 2. trop. calamity, ruin, destruction... a devastation, laying waste...” (Thayer p 607; 4938)

Misery:

“talaiporia... (talaiporos, q. v.), hardship, trouble, calamity, misery...” (Thayer, p. 613-614; 5004)

“talaiporos... enduring toils and troubles; afflicted, wretched...” (Thayer, p. 614; 5005)

The paths men walk lead to destruction and misery. Both for themselves, for those who go with them, and for those who cross paths with them.

17 And the way of peace have they not known:

The way of peace, which the law would have brought them if they had only walked in it, they would not know or understand. Each had turned to his own way and in that way, only turmoil would be found.

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

*The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, **there is no fear of God before his eyes.** 2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, that his iniquity will not be found out and be hated. 3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: He hath ceased to be wise (and) to do good. 4 He deviseth iniquity upon his bed; He setteth himself in a way that is not good; He abhorreth not evil. Ps 36:1-4*

The fear and reverence, the respect and awe which belongs to the Creator of the universe and is manifested by the keeping of his commands. This manifested how much fear of God one really had. In God's view these had none.

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law;

This is logic and spiritual truth. No matter how much the Jews tried to avoid this conclusion, it could not be removed. After God “gave up” and “scattered” the nations and chose Abraham, the Law through Moses was only for Israel. the twisted and squirmed, they could not remove themselves from these indictments.

Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, even as Jehovah my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the midst of the land whither ye go in to possess it. 6 Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. 7 For what great nation is there, that hath a god so nigh unto them, as Jehovah our God is whensoever we call upon him? 8 And what great nation is there, that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Deut 4:5-8

They “knew” that the law was for them.

“oida,... 1. like the Lat. NOVI it has the signification of a present to know, understand; and in the plpf. the signif. of an impf. 1. to know,... 2. to know l. e. get knowledge of, understand, perceive; a. any fact... b. the force and meaning of something that has definite meaning:... c. as in class. Grk., foll. by an inf. in the sense of to know how(Lat. calleo, to be skilled in ...Phil 4:12)...” (Thayer, p. 174; 1492).

They understood and perceived it clearly. They knew it was not written to the Gentiles. This was their law and it was indicting them. The law only speaks to those who are under it. No Jew could evade this. The words spoken were spoken to the Jews about the Jews. They were the ones to whom God said there is none righteous.

that every mouth may be stopped,

This is the purpose of the law, and of the Paul's book to the Romans up to this point. Every mouth must be "stopped."

"thrasso... to fence in, block up, stop up, close up..." (Thayer p. 657; 5420)

God wants this nonsense stopped. There are no excuses, nothing more to be said. Their mouths must be fenced in, blocked, stopped up. Like Job's was:

Behold, I am of small account; What shall I answer thee? I lay my hand upon my mouth. 5 Once have I spoken, and I will not answer; Yea, twice, but I will proceed no further. Job 40:4-5

There is not a mouth on any person reading the book up to this point, nor is there anyone who ever lived under the law who has anything left to say. They stand condemned, and there just isn't any way to justify or rationalize it. They are without excuse. Just be silent and listen.

and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God:

The law fulfilled a twofold purpose. Its very existence as a separator of the Jews and the Gentiles condemned the Gentiles. It manifested that God had given them up due to sin and that the Jews should have no contact with them for they were unclean. Yet the law also pronounced a verdict on those it had separated out. You have failed, not one of you has kept it. Thus the entire world has been brought under the "judgment" and condemnation of God.

"hupodikos... under judgment, one who has lost his suit..."

There simply was no other way for God to operate. He could not lower his righteous standards without paying a price(3:21-30). He had to show men how far short of his standards they really were. All of this in order to bring them under judgement so they would fully appreciate the grace of God when it was finally revealed.

20 because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight;

No Jew that ever lived was justified by the Law of Moses. That Law did not justify, that was not its purpose and God did not give it as a system of justification. There was no means for true forgiveness under the law. God made it clear that the blood of bulls and goats could never cleanse them of sin. The sins already "cleansed" by these sacrifices were still there on the day of atonement when they were placed on the head of the scape goat and sent into the wilderness. At no time were those sins ever removed.

for through the law (cometh) the knowledge of sin.

The law was given by God in mercy and kindness. He gave it to show men what his true and righteous standards were so they would appreciate how far short they had fallen from them. He gave it to bring the knowledge of sin into the minds of all. Without that knowledge and without the strong feelings of how far short we have fallen we would not feel our need. Do we blame the doctor when he gives a list of symptoms for a dreaded disease in order to show people who have it that they are in fact infected with it? No the doctor only points out what we ourselves have caught. They are not to blame for our catching it, but are to be thanked because they pointed out that we had it so we could take whatever steps were necessary to either be healed or keep our loved ones from catching it. This is what God did with sin. He pointed out the symptoms in the law. He did not make men sinners by the law, but he did show how sinful they were by showing the heights to which true righteousness really climbs. When men see how far short they have fallen they can take steps to do something about it.

Multitudes of questions obviously will arise at this point. If the law never saved anyone, then how were people saved under it? If the Law was given simply to show our wickedness, then was it really a good law? In the next section Paul will consider the questions which raise up in the mind as a result of this bitter conclusion.

Romans 3:21-31

Review/Introduction:

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.

The theme of the book of Romans is made up of three basic points. First, Paul is not ashamed of the gospel. In fact, he is proud of it and is excited to share it (1:13-15)! It is the reason why Paul is not ashamed that forms the second part of the theme: The gospel is the power of God that brings salvation both to the Jew and the Greek (Gentile). The third part of the theme is: The gospel reveals that God makes man righteous on the basis of his faith.

- 1. Paul is not ashamed of the gospel.**
- 2. It is the power of God that brings salvation to Jew and Greek (all).**
- 3. It reveals God makes man righteous (acceptable to him) on the basis of faith.**

Before continuing with this theme, the Holy Spirit through the writings of this book wanted to prove to all who really wanted to know the truth that the universal need of the gospel is based on the fall of all men into sin.

First, He wanted us all to know that all Gentile and Jewish apostates along with their descendants were under the judgment and wrath of God (1:18-32). Not one had a legitimate excuse for their treacherous conduct.

Second, He revealed that all those with high enough moral standards (both Jew and Gentile) to agree with the assessment that those who rejected God and chose idolatry with a subsequent fall into immorality were worthy of death would also be under God's wrath because though not to the same degree, they were doing exactly the same things (2:1-16).

Finally, a thorough discussion of how God dealt with his chosen people. He first described all the advantages God had given to them, and also included a few benefits they only imagined. With all their advantages (real and imagined), they had done no better than those God has given up because of their apostasy (Gentile Nations). God's name was actually blasphemed among these Gentiles because of what the Jews had done (2:17-29). The indictment against Jews was that they stood before God without any excuse. They had squandered all God's blessings, had been accused under the own law of being sinners and ended up no better than those God had called them out of (3:1-20). Without the gospel the law would only condemn them.

This section of Romans (3:21-32) forms the hub of the book, and the transition from the negative side of man's salvation (he is lost) to the positive side (through the gospel he can be saved). More importantly, it is a window into the righteousness and holiness of God. Few places in the Scripture offer the kind of detailed explanations that are found here. God opened his mind to us and explained why the cup could not be removed from Jesus.

A note of caution. The Spirit of God is revealing some of the deepest mysteries of God. It should not therefore be surprising that some of the greatest controversies rage over their meaning. More than anywhere else the warnings of the Spirit through Peter, Moses, and the Proverbs:

*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 stedfastness. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him (be) the glory both now and for ever. Amen. 2Pet. 3:15-18*

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

*Every word of God is tried: He is a shield unto them that take refuge in him. 6 **Add thou not unto his***

words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar. Pr. 30:5-6

From these Scriptures it is clear that some of Paul's writings are "*hard to be understood.*" There is no doubt that this section is one of those writings. The Holy Spirit is only using Paul to explain these things, but in order to protect ourselves from "*wresting the Scriptures,*" two things must be kept ever present in our mind. Only that which is revealed belongs to us and should be accepted. If God did not give enough information to fully draw a complete conclusion then we must accept that allow "*the secret things to belong to God.*" We dare not "*add to His words,*" because by guessing, we can only "*become a liar.*" So we must approach these Scriptures with great care. Comparing them with other passages on the same subject and seeking to be as precise as possible in our understanding.

21 But now apart from the law

The section begins with a logical break. The term "now" is defined:

"nuni... now, at this very moment (precisely now, neither before nor after...) and only of Time, almost always with the pres., very rarely with the fut... Not found in the N. T. exc. in the writ of Paul and in a few places in Acts and the Ep. to the Heb.; ... 1. of time: with a pres... with a perf. indicating continuance.. Eph. 2:13... 2. contrary to Grk. usage, in stating a conclusion... but since the case stands thus, [as it is]... ; but now...." (Thayer, p. 430-431; 3570)

Since the term has time and logical significance, and since both time (this could not have happened before Jesus died on the cross), and logical conclusion (based on the thoughts of 1:18-3:20) are both contextually accurate and Scriptural, it is impossible to know for certain.

I have often wondered at such times whether the Spirit has not been intentionally vague to give God's people the right to both conclusions. So whether you conclude that "*now* refers to time and expresses that fact that only after Jesus died on the cross and set aside the law, could these things be offered, or whether you feel more comfortable that this is simply a logical conclusion based upon the truth of the previous thoughts regarding the sinful nature of man, the fact is that "*apart from*" the law, God has given man what he needs.

"choris... adv., fr. Hom. down; 1. separately, apart... 2. as a prep. with the gen. ... a. without any person or thing (making no use of, having no association with, apart from, aloof from, etc.)... I without i.e. being absent or wanting... apart from... without connection and fellowship with one... apart from... destitute of the fellowship and blessings of one..." (Thayer, p. 675; 5565)

As is clear from the definition above this term is used to describe a separation. There is no "*association*" between the law and the righteousness of God here being described. It is "*apart from*" without "*connection*" or "*fellowship*" with the law. The Spirit is affirming here what is clearly set forth elsewhere.

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. Col. 2:13-15

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. 2Cor. 3:14

15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto. 16 Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17 Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect. 18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise: but God hath granted it to Abraham by promise. . . 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. 3:15-18; 23-25

God has "*taken it (the law) out of the way nailing it to the cross.*" From that time on, it was "*done*

away in Christ.” The “covenant confirmed beforehand by God” was his promise to Abraham, and it stood alone.”The law, which came 430 years later,” did “not disannul” that promise. The law was to be a “tutor to bring us to Christ. “ Once “faith” came, “we are no longer under a tutor.” Hence now, completely separate and apart from the law, God has made man righteous.

a righteousness of God hath been manifested,

The Spirit now returns to the theme set forth in (1:16-17: *For therein is revealed a righteousness of God*). Note the similarities and differences:

1:16:	<i>dikaiousune</i>	<i>gar</i>	<i>theou</i>	<i>en auto</i>	<i>apokalupto</i>
	a righteousness	for	of God	in it	is revealed
3:21	<i>dikaiousune</i>		<i>theou</i>		<i>phaneroo</i>
	a righteousness		of God		is manifested

Essentially the difference between the two passages lies in the terms “*apokalupto*” and “*phaneroo*.”

“*apokalupto*... 1. prop. to uncover, lay open what has been veiled or covered up; to disclose, make bare:... 2. Metaph. to make known, make manifest, disclose, what before was unknown; a. pass. of any method whatever by which something before unknown becomes evident... e. of persons, previously concealed, making their appearance in public... “ (Thayer, p. 62; 601)

“*phaneroo*,... to make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown, to manifest, whether by words, or deeds, or in any other way... to make known by teaching... b. with an acc of the person, to expose to view, make manifest, show one ... Pass. to become known, to be plainly recognized, thoroughly understood...” (Thayer, p. 648; 5319)

A careful reading of these definitions reveals that they are very close in meaning. It would be difficult to tell the difference between “*laying open what has been veiled or covered up*” and “*making visible or known what has been hidden or unknown.*” They say exactly the same thing in different words. Separate and apart from the law, the righteousness of God has “*become known*” and is now “*thoroughly understood.*”

As always with the construction “a righteousness **of** God,” we must assess if this is God’s righteousness that he possesses (objective genitive – *the object receiving*) or a righteousness he is giving to others (subjective genitive – *the subject giving*). Since this is a righteousness “through faith in Jesus to all that believe” (23), this is how God is making us righteous. It is a free justification (made righteous) through the redemption in Christ (24). The conclusion: “We reckon therefore that a man is justified (made righteous) by faith apart from the works of the law (28). Hence the context clearly indicates that the theme of the book of Romans is the truth that the gospel reveals that God makes men righteous on the basis of faith in Christ.

being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

Though this righteousness is apart from the law in regard to its power, it was “*witnessed*” there that it is the truth.

“*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... a. in general; absol. to give (not to keep back testimony)... i.q. to prove or confirm by testimony... to bear witness (of) anything... b. emphatically; to utter honorable testimony, give a good report... pass. ... to be borne (good) witness to, to be well reported of, to have (good) testimony borne to one, accredited, attested, of good report, approved...” (Thayer, p 390-391; 3140)

From Genesis 3:15 and 12:1-3 and continuing through the law (Genesis - Deuteronomy) and the prophets, God had prophesied to his people about the Messiah who would come and bless them. Just as the passage in Rom 1:17 included a prophesy from Habakkuk to validate its veracity, the Spirit now cites both the law and the prophets. There are so many passages that prove this point. The Spirit will cite some of them in the subsequent portions of the book. God had always intended to save man in this manner:

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

Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God; 9 who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, 2 Tim 1:8-9

Blessed (be) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly (places) in Christ: 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: 5 having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, Eph 1:3-5

The prophets merely revealed it before it happened so the testimony of the apostles would be more powerful. This was not something new.

Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that (should come) unto you: 11 searching what (time) or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. 12 To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into. 1Pet. 1:10-12

This was something God had intended from the very beginning he told Adam and Eve and Abraham first, then through Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others he became much more specific.

22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ

The Spirit now reveals exactly what was taught in the law and the prophets: that God would make us righteous “*through*” faith in Jesus. Christ.

“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... 3. with the gen. of a thing dia is used to denote the manner in which a thing is done, or the formal cause... II. of the Ground or Reason one account of which anything is or is not done; by reason of, because of... 1. of the reason for which a things is done, or of the efficient reason, when for greater perspicuity it may be rendered by... 2. of the reason or cause on account of which anything is or is done, or ought to be done; on account of, because of... “. (Thayer, p. 132-135; 1223)

With the preposition “*dia*” it is clearly revealed that faith in Jesus Christ is “*the means or instrument by which*” the righteousness of God is given to man. Faith in Jesus Christ is “*the instrument used to accomplish*” our becoming righteous. Although this is exactly what was said in 1:16-17 (though in different words), this time the Spirit intends to elaborate and explain exactly how God planned and executed this eternal purpose. Now that it has been clearly shown that all men failed to even come close to the righteousness of God, it was imperative that God intervene. His intervention was planned in eternity and witnessed by the law and the prophets.

This is the ONLY means available now for anyone to receive the righteousness of God. On his own man failed. Those God gave up only went further and further into evil. Those who were given the law also became more and more corrupt. All men stand corrupted and wicked in the eyes of God. He will come back to this point in the next verse and drive it home.

unto all them that believe;

Since all had become broken, ruined and corrupted, there was no hope for anyone unless God offered this second chance. But that is exactly that which the Law and the prophets testified! God would offer righteousness on the basis of their trust in Jesus and there was no other condition than this. They did not need to be Jews, they did not need to be among the morally upright. Even among

the most wicked found in the first chapter, God was offering this righteousness. It all rests of the term “unto:”

“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).

In using this term, the Spirit intended us to see that becoming righteous is something that “*all-every class, every kind, every quality*” of individual who believed. It is not every class of believer in the sense of the type of faith, but every class of believer who has the faith. The righteousness that God gives to those who have faith in Jesus “unto” all. Everyone who has this faith “enters into” this righteousness. This too is exactly what was said in 1:16. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes it.

for there is no distinction;

That which had existed since God called Abraham and was cemented with the giving of the law of Moses was now removed. There is no longer any “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)

The middle wall of partition was broken down (Eph 2:14-18), and there was now absolutely no difference in the eyes of God between a Jew and a Gentile. There is no longer any distinction between “those who have the law” and “those who do not.” How could there be? The point being made here is very similar to that in Hosea. After God put away Israel and Judah for their adultery, they were just like the Gentiles (cast off). When God offered to bring them back he would offer it to all without distinction. Because there was no longer any difference between them.

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? As he saith also in Hosea, I will call that my people, which was not my people; And her beloved, that was not beloved. 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. Rom 9:25-26

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 1Pet. 2:9-10

23 for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;

A “*gar*” once again is the “*particle of affirmation and conclusion.*” “*By the use of this particle, either the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added. . . or some previous declaration is explained.*” God makes man righteous by faith in Jesus, all will be made righteous by this means and there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile because all have sinned. Not one Jew and not one Gentile will become righteous in the eyes of God without putting their faith in Jesus Christ because not one of them can be righteous on their own. Since this is the only other means of becoming righteous, the only conclusion (*gar*) one can draw after pondering verse 23 is verse 22!

The sad reality is that God now clearly reveals that “all *pas*, - *all or any* of the class indicated” have sinned. Every Jew and every Gentile. This is the only logical conclusion that can be drawn after reading the first three chapters. Not a single person lived up to the standards they were living under. There will be no excuses because all have “sinned.”

“*harmartano*... *to miss the mark, ... with gen. of the thing missed ... then to err, be mistaken*; lastly *to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honor, to do or go wrong*... *to miss one’s aim in the literal sense. ...In the N.T. to wander from the law of God, violate God’s law, sin ... b. ... to commit (lit. sin) a sin ...*” (Thayer, p. 30; 264)

amartano ... To miss, miss the mark, c. gen., ... hekon hemartane photos he missed the man on purpose, ... II.; amartano hodou to miss the road, ... 2. generally, to fail of doing, fail of one's purpose, to miss one's point, fail, go wrong, failed in hitting upon the thought, ... to mistake it, ... 3. to fail of having, i.e. to be deprived of, lose, c. gen., amartesesthai opopes that I should lose my sight, ... II. to fail, do wrong, err, sin, ... to err in judgment, ... I erred in this, ... to do wrong in a matter..." (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:264)

All have "violated God's law" and "wandered from the law of God." Though God made all men upright (Ecc 7:29). They sought out many difference schemes and devices. By so doing they all "missed or wandered from the path of uprightness and honor." They all went wrong. They "fell short" of what God had intended and purposed for them.

"hustereo,... 1. Act. to be husteros i.e. behind; i.e. a. to come late or too tardily... to be left behind in the race and so fail to reach the goal, to fall short of the end;... with apo and the gen. indicating the end, metaph. fail to become a partaker... b. to be inferior, in power, influence, rank... c. to fail, be wanting... d. to be in want of, lack... 2. Pass. to suffer want... to be devoid [R. V. fall short] of..." (Thayer, p. 646; 5302).

Man was originally created in the image and likeness of God. The glory and excellence to which he was poised to attain is only something to imagine now for it did not occur. Every single person through one sinful lust or another has fallen short of the glory of God.

It is interesting that here too one must decide whether this is an objective or subjective genitive. Did man fall short in giving God the glory (subjective) or did man fall short of manifesting and attaining that glory himself (objective)? Both are true and Scriptural. Man failed to show the fulness of the glory of God because all that might have been was destroyed in the garden. Man also failed individually to attain to the glorious standard of life that God had offered to him. As each fell into sin they diminished their potential for greatness.

All have fallen short of the magnificent, excellent and preeminent glory of God. God can not offer man any glory and praise for this life he has lived because all of them failed to reach it. At the same time, the need to give God the glory and praise by a life of total and complete submission to his will was also destroyed by sin.

24 being justified freely by his grace

Beginning in this verse it becomes very important that every vocabulary word be clearly identified. Remember that the Spirit described inspiration as the ability to take the things of God and choose just the right words to convey that thought.

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. 10 But unto us God revealed (them) through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. 12 But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual (words). 1Cor. 2:9-13

God chose the Greek language to convey these things, and especially when we come to difficult passages, it becomes of great importance that we know as exactly as possible the meaning the Spirit meant to convey when he selected these words and how the grammar was chosen to specify the actions or limitations of what was said. This is definitely one of those passages that the ignorant and unstedfast have wrested. For this reason, two or even three definitions will be quoted to be certain we have a clear picture of the word as it was used in that day. After we see the clearest possible understanding from the translation, we can compare the conclusions we are drawing with other Scriptures to be certain the drawn harmonize with the rest of the Bible.

After proving that all have sinned and fallen short, the Spirit now speaks of "being justified."

"dikaioo... 1. prop to make dikaios; to render righteous or such as he ought to be... 2. to show, exhibit, evince, one to be righteous, such as he is and wishes himself to be considered... 3. tina, to declare,

pronounce, one to be just, righteous, or such as he ought to be... a. with the negative idea predominant, *to declare guiltless* one accused or who may be accused, *acquitted of a charge* or *reproach*, ...b. with the positive idea predominant, *to judge, declare, pronounce, righteous and therefore acceptable...*" (Thayer, p. 150; 1344)

dikaioo primarily "*to deem to be right*," signifies, in the NT, (a) "*to show to be right or righteous*"; in the passive voice, to be justified, Matt 11:19; Luke 7:35; Rom 3:4; 1 Tim 3:16; (b) "*to declare to be righteous, to pronounce righteous*," (Vine's Expository Dictionary NT:1344).

God takes a man or woman who believes that Jesus is the Christ and died for our sins and based on that faith and submissive obedience he changes their unrighteousness into righteousness. He "*deems them to be right*," "*justifies them*," and "*declares them to be righteous*." Now, in His eyes, they are "*such as they ought to be, declared guiltless and acquitted*." God, will "*judge, declare, pronounce, righteous and therefore acceptable*" all who believe the gospel and put their faith in Jesus Christ. This is the heart of the "*power of God unto salvation*."

When sinners start trusting Jesus and doing exactly what Jesus commanded, God declares them guiltless and "acquits them of the charge" of being a sinner. What is the cost for all this? What does God demand in addition to our placing full trust in Jesus and turning our lives over to his keeping? It was done "*freely!*"

"*dorea... a gift...* The acc. *dorean* (prop. as a gift, gift-wise...). a. *freely, for naught, gratis, gratuitously...*" (Thayer, p. 161; 1431)

This too was foretold and witnessed in the prophets.

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3 Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Isa 55:1-3

God gave his righteousness to all who want to have it at no cost. It is all offered as a free gift to those whose heart wants to be right with him.

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. Jn. 3:16

It is within the term *grace* that we see the reason why it was given freely. God fully revealed His heart to us by using this term.

"*charis... grace*; I. e. 1. prop. that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: grace of speech... 2. *good will, lovingkindness, favor*: in a broad sense... (*favor* i.e. act of favoring...) ... used of the kindness of a master towards his inferiors or servants, and so esp. of God towards men... ...the word *charis* contains the idea of *kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved...* pre-eminently of that kindness by which God bestows favors even upon the ill-deserving, and grants to sinners the pardon of their offenses, and bids them accept eternal salvation through Christ... *charis* is used of the *merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues...* II Th. 1:12... 4. *thanks* (for benefits, services, favors)... to be thankful to one..." (Thayer, p. 665-666; 5485)

"*charis... grace*; Latin *gratia*: I. *outward grace* or *favour* (as we say *well* or *ill favoured*), *grace, loveliness*, Hom., etc.; II. *grace* or *favour felt*, whether on the part of the Doer or the Receiver: 1. on the part of the Doer, *grace, graciousness, kindness, goodwill*, ... *for* or *towards* one, ... 2. on the part of the Receiver, *the sense of favour received, thankfulness, thanks, gratitude*, ... *for* a thing, ... to acknowledge a sense of favour, *feel grateful*, ... to feel *gratitude* to one for a thing, ... (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT: 5485)

As we carefully consider the breadth of the term, two things come to the forefront. It is the "*grace* or *favour felt*, whether on the part of the Doer or the Receiver. Both the giver and receiver of the grace are involved. It can describe the grace or favor felt by either the one giving or the one

receiving. Since this section of Scripture is primarily focused on God's side and not ours, it would be better to see this as the grace and favor on the part of the giver. So this is God's kindness and goodwill.

God feels "good will, lovingkindness, and favor." This truth is revealed over and over again in the Scriptures. In spite of man's sin, rebellion and treachery, God still cares and wants to give him favor and grace. He continues to shower him with kindness that he does not deserve. It is a merciful kindness that has no bounds or limits.

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.
Ps 103:8-13

but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), 6 and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly (places), in Christ Jesus: 7 that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus: 8 for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, (it is) the gift of God; 9 not of works, that no man should glory. Eph. 2:4-9

God's grace is tied to his mercy, longsuffering, and lovingkindness. He revealed He feels the same way a loving father feels toward his children. It grieved him deeply to see man in such dire circumstances. God simply could not leave us in such a terrible plight. His pity, mercy, grace and love motivated him to offer us a new means of becoming righteous.

He gave this new means of righteousness because he cares. Because he is kind and benevolent. It was these emotions, deep within the heart of God, that brought the favor which is undeserved and the gift which could never be earned. Thus the offer of pardon and restoration to his divine favor and not requiring the full payment that was due. It was this gracious kindness and favor that led to his lowering the standard of righteousness from perfect obedience under the law, to a trusting faith in Jesus Christ. From something no one ever did (all have sinned), to what all can now choose to do (believe that Jesus died for them).

Yet this favor was not free. It required a ransom and it was only through that ransom that grace could be bestowed:

through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

The basic meaning of through ("dia" see full definition page ?112?) is "the means or instrument by which anything is effected or accomplished." So the favor God longed to give had a roadblock and a hurdle. It required more than just good will and an emotional desire. It required a "redemption"

"apo-lutrosis,... (from apolutroo signifying a. to redeem one by paying the price, ... b. to let one go free on receiving the price...), a releasing effected by payment of ransom; redemption, deliverance, liberation procured by the payment of a ransom;... 2. everywhere in the N. T. metaph., viz. deliverance effected through the death of Christ from the retributive wrath of a holy God and the merited penalty of sin Rom 3:24... deliverance from the penalty of transgressions, effected through their expiation Heb 9:15...." (Thayer, p. 65; 629)

"apo-lutrosis,... The verb apolutroo derived from lutroo and then from lutron, "to set free for a ransom," does not occur in the NT, but the related noun apolutrosis is used quite often, ... It means "setting free for a ransom." and is used of prisoners of war, slaves, and criminals condemned to death (Kittel, TDWNT NT:629)

The two sides to this term perfectly illustrate where we are in the book of Romans. Man has incurred a terrible debt as a result of his sins. Both Jew and Gentile have violated God's perfect standard of righteousness and missed the mark God set for them. The penalty for this failure is death (Rom. 1:32; 6:23). The penalty could not be set aside without the payment of a ransom. What Jesus endured on the cross was the ransom that had to be paid for our death to be cancelled

and replaced with grace and salvation.

God has “let man go free on the receiving of the price.” God has “redeemed by paying the price.” He has released us “effected by paying of ransom.” The great depths of this passage and the concept of redemption can only be seen by comparing it with other Scriptures. God promised Israel that the thick cloud of their sins would be blotted out as a result of God’s redemption. Peter reminded the Christians he was writing to that they had been redeemed from their vain manner of life by the precious blood of Jesus. Paul writing to the Galatians and Ephesians expressed the truth that Christ redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse for us and through his blood our redemption is the forgiveness of our sins.

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Isa. 44:22

knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, (even the blood) of Christ: 20 who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of times for your sake, 1Pet. 1:18-20

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

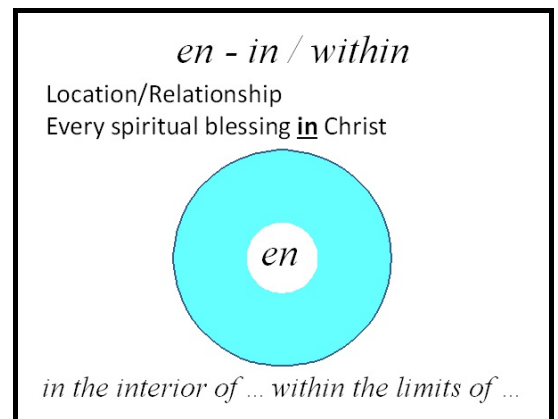
in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, Eph. 1:7

These passages help prepare us for the direction the Spirit is leading. Not one sinner could go free until the price was paid. No one could be justified from his sinful disobedience without the payment of a ransom. Someone had to pay the price for the man’s deliverance from sin. God, motivated by his grace, paid it.

in Christ Jesus

This is the first of the eight times this expression is used in the book of Romans. It is clearly very important to understand its significance since “in Christ Jesus” and “in Christ” are used more than 90 times in the New Testament.

*en...a preposition taking the dative after it;... Eng. in, on, at, with, by among. ... 6. Of that in which any person or thing is inherently fixed, implanted or with which it is intimately connected... b. of a person to whom another is wholly joined and to whose power and influence he is subject, so that the former may be likened to the place in which the latter lives and moves. So used in the writings of Paul and John particularly of intimate relationship with God or with Christ... of frequent use by Paul are the phrases *en christo, en christo iesou, en kurio...* ingrafted as it were in Christ, in fellowship and union with Christ, with the Lord...” (Thayer, p. 209-212; 1722)*



As Thayer notes, it describes an intimate relationship of oneness and union with Jesus Christ. The relationship begins when we join with him in baptism:

Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. Rom. 6:3-4

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. Gal. 3:27

Once we are buried with him in baptism, are baptized into Christ and put on Christ, we are in Christ.

Wherefore if any man is in Christ, (he is) a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. 2 Cor 5:17

Our redemption is only one of a multitude of blessings given to those who enter into this intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

Blessed (be) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly (places) in Christ: Eph 1:3

God has Blessed us with Every Spiritual Blessing in the heavenly Places in Christ			
<u>Romans 3:24</u>	Redemption	<u>Romans 6:11</u>	Alive to God
<u>Romans 6:23</u>	Eternal life	<u>Romans 8:1</u>	No condemnation
<u>Romans 8:39</u>	The love of God	<u>1 Cor 1:2</u>	Sanctified
<u>1 Cor 15:22</u>	Made alive.	<u>2 Cor 1:21</u>	He established us
<u>2 Cor 2:14</u>	Leads us in triumph	<u>Gal 2:4</u>	Liberty
<u>Eph 2:7</u>	Grace and kindness	<u>2 Tim 1:1</u>	The promise of life
<u>2 Tim 2:1</u>	Grace	<u>2 Tim 2:10</u>	Salvation

25 whom God set forth (to be) a propitiation,

The Spirit now reveals exactly why this relationship to Jesus was necessary for our redemption. He was the one God “set forth” as a propitiation.

“protithemi... 1. to place before, to set forth,... to set forth to be looked at, expose to view... 2. Mid. to set before one’s self, propose to one’s self; to purpose, determine...” (Thayer, p. 552 4388)

Jesus has been (aorist) “placed before” “set forth to be looked at” and “exposed to view” as a propitiation. He was “displayed publicly” (NASB), “put forward” (ESV) “presented” (NIV) as the propitiation. The type of public display that God had in mind here is much more complicated than we might initially imagine. It takes in not only sinners in this realm, but the principalities and power of the heavenly places in the spiritual realm (Eph. 3:9-10). It concerns God’s just and righteous character. With Jesus death on the cross, God set forth his “propitiation.”

“hilasterios... relating to appeasing or expiating, having placating or expiating force, expiatory... to hilasterion, as subst. A means of appeasing or expiating, a propitiation... ;” (Thayer p 301; 2435)

Whenever the definition of a word is as difficult to understand as the word itself, it is evident that it is very complex idea. Each of the terms in this definition must be carefully examined until they are understood.

“Appeasing” is a term describing a calming and soothing often by removing something which caused contention or strife. “Placating” also refers to the removing of something which brought about anger, disappointment or sorrow. It is in the term “expiate” that the greatest portion of this word lies.

expiate - to pay the penalty for (a wrong, sin or crime); atone for... to make amends; completely appease. (World Book Dictionary p 749)

What exactly is a “propitiation?” It is very unlikely anyone reading this term has ever used it to describe something they or someone they know did. What exactly did God do when he did this?

propitiate to prevent or reduce the anger of; win the favor of; appease or conciliate (one who is offended or likely to be...” (World Book Dictionary p 1666)

Since every sin is a selfish act of overreaching where something was taken which belonged to another. This stolen thing must be returned. If it cannot be returned then something of greater value must be offered in its place. This is where “propitiation” enters the discussion. Each sinner has robbed God or man of that which was rightfully his. Unless God offered something of greater value than this, it could never be appeased or expiated. Jesus became that propitiation. He is the appeasement. His death on the cross offered something of such great value that God could offer it as the payment for every sin man ever committed.

And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 and he is the

propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. 1Jn. 2:1-2

God's prophesy through Isaiah explains and elaborates on how this was to be accomplished.

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. . . . 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 53:4-12

The propitiation (placating and appeasing) that Jesus endured on the cross involved at least the following:

<i>By His stripes we are healed.</i>	<i>Jehovah laid upon him the iniquity of all of us.</i>
<i>Pleased God to bruise him and put him to grief.</i>	<i>He made his soul an offering for sin.</i>
<i>God was satisfied by the travail of his soul.</i>	<i>He shall bear their iniquities.</i>
<i>He poured out his soul unto death</i>	<i>He was numbered with the transgressors.</i>
<i>He bore the sin of many.</i>	

Jesus removed the penalty of sin by taking it himself. What he endured on the cross was of such a great magnitude, that all the sins man has ever committed were appeased and expiated. Since God used something of greater value and importance than the lives of those who sinned, there can be no charge of unfairness.

through faith, in his blood,

With a "dia," the Spirit reveals: "The means or instrument by which" the propitiating power of Christ's death on the cross "is effected or accomplished." It is *through* faith in his blood! This is the specific means, agency or instrument through which the appeasing of Gods wrath is brought about on an individual basis. When God sees faith in Jesus' blood in the heart of any man or woman then a propitiation occurs. This is the only agency and means through which grace, redemption, and propitiation come. This is the heart and the power of the gospel. Christ had to die for our sins, and it is the crucifixion of Christ that is the power and wisdom of God.

Now I make known unto you brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, 2 by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; 1 Cor 15:1-4

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. 1 Cor 1:23-24

One must fully trust in the power of the crucified Jesus Christ who died for our sins and shed his blood to bring salvation. Those who believe that receive the propitiation.

There is a very important tie between the propitiation of Jesus and his blood. This is a concept that God began explaining to us back in the Old Testament. We have to understand some of these concepts in order to appreciate exactly what Jesus did on the cross.

God began his early education by explaining the use of animal blood. He revealed that the life of fleshly life is in the blood, and because it is in the blood, animal blood can be used as a spiritual picture or image of what ultimately would occur when Jesus died and shed his blood. The blood makes atonement by reason of the life that is in it.

For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life. 12 Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood. Lev. 17:11-12

When the day of atonement was explained to the people these ideas were again set forth. The goat was killed and his blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat. When this blood was placed on the mercy seat, atonement was made for all the sins of Israel and the defilement and uncleanness it had created in the holy place.

*Then shall he kill the goat of the sin-offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with his blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat: 16 and he shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleannesses of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, even all their sins: and so shall he do for the tent of meeting, that dwelleth with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. And it shall be a statute for ever unto you: **in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month**, ye shall afflict your souls, and shall do no manner of work, the home-born, or the stranger that sojourneth among you: 30 **for on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before Jehovah.** 31 It is a sabbath of solemn rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls; it is a statute for ever. 32 **And the priest, who shall be anointed and who shall be consecrated to be priest in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen garments, even the holy garments: 33 and he shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary; and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar; and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.** 34 And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make atonement for the children of Israel because of all their sins once in the year. And he did as Jehovah commanded Moses. Lev 16:15-16; 29-34*

In Hebrews we have an inspired commentary on this passage. Once a year, the priest entered into the Most Holy Place with blood to offer for himself and the people.

*Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services; 7 **but into the second the high priest alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and for the errors of the people:** 8 the Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, while the first tabernacle is yet standing; Heb. 9:6-8*

Then the application is made. Christ came through a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not of this creation. He did not bring the blood of goats and calves, but His own blood. With this propitiation, he returned to heaven, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

***But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, 12 nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.** 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 **And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.** Heb. 9:11-15*

The Spirit continues to explain exactly what Jesus did. The copies and illustrations of the atonement were animal blood on the material creation mercy seat. But the heavenly things themselves needed something far better than the illustrations. They needed by blood of Christ who was the word who was with God and was God. It was this eternal spirit that offered the propitiation.

***It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.** 24 **For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us:** 25 nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the*

high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own; 26 else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: **but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.** 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this (cometh) judgment; 28 **so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation.** Heb 9:23-28

Again he returns to the illustration and shadow of animal blood. This time unequivocally saying that it could never truly take away sin. But when He came into the world, he took the body God prepared and offered that body with that blood. That body and that blood did take away sin. It was the offering of that body on the cross that offered one sacrifice for sin that perfected forever them that are sanctified.

For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. 5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, **Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, But a body didst thou prepare for me;** ... 8 Saying above, Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and (sacrifices) for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein (the which are offered according to the law), 9 then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do thy will. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10 **By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.** 11 And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins: 12 **but he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;** 13 henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet. 14 **For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.** Heb 10:4-5; 8-14

Although the passage is highly symbolic, its summary of our redemption and propitiation is very complete.

Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, **to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy.** Dan 9:24

Miscellaneous Scriptures that also give insight into redemption and propitiation

He that spared not his own Son, but **delivered him up for us all**, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Rom 8:32

Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, even as ye are unleavened. For **our passover also hath been sacrificed**, (even) Christ: 1Cor 5:7

For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that **Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;** 4 and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; 1 Cor 15:3-4 ASV

in whom we have our **redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, Eph 1:5

knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; 19 but **with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, (even the blood) of Christ;** 1 Peter 1:18-19

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.** 1 John 4:9-10

Because **Christ also suffered for sins once**, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being **put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;** 1 Peter 3:18

For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, (himself) man, Christ Jesus, 6 who **gave himself a ransom for all;** the testimony (to be borne) in its own times; 1 Tim 2:5-6

My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an

Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 and **he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.** 1John 2:1-2

And you know that **He was manifested to take away our sins**, and in Him there is no sin. 1 John 3:5-6

And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: **for thou was slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood** (men) of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, 10 and madest them (to be) unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon earth. Rev 5:9-10

“Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who **Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree**, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed. 1Pet. 2:23-25

Christ has **redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us** (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Gal 3:13-14

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**: Eph 2:15-16

For it was the good pleasure (of the Father) that in him should all the fulness dwell; 20 and through him **to reconcile all things unto himself**, having made peace **through the blood of his cross**; through him, (I say), whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens. 21 And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, 22 **yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death**, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprieveable before him: Col 1:19-22

For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, (himself) man, Christ Jesus, 6 **who gave himself a ransom for all**; the testimony (to be borne) in its own times; 1 Tim 2:5-6

in whom we have our **redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses**, according to the riches of his grace, Eph 1:7

To him who loves us and has **freed us from our sins by his blood** 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Rev 1:5-7

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For **He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.** 2 Cor 5:17-21

to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime,

With an “eis” a second purpose for Christ's propitiation is revealed. This term introduces “the end to which a thing reaches or extends,” “the end which a thing is adapted to attain,” or “the end by which a thing is completed, i.e. the result or effect.” Something needed to be shown and the expiatory power of the blood of Jesus Christ “showed” it.

“endeixis, (endeiknuni) demonstration, proof: i.e. manifestation, made in act, ...” (Thayer p. 213; 1732)

“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)

“endeixis ... (derivatives of endeiknumai ‘to show, to demonstrate,’) ... apodeixis ... (derivative of

apodeiknumi 'to demonstrate, to show,') : the means by which one knows that something is a fact – 'proof, evidence, verification, indication.' ..." (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:1732)

God wanted a demonstration and a proof of his righteousness. He desired to show, demonstrate and prove it. He needed "*the means by which one knows something is a fact,*" he wanted clear "*proof, evidence, verification,*" and "*indication.*" This is a complicated point of justice that God did not want left out of his revelation to man.

God wanted to save man, but could not do it at the cost of his own righteousness. His righteousness must be protected at all costs. God is fair, just and equitable. Never does he do anything that is unfair, but this had the look and savor of unfairness. Hence, Jesus death not only gave propitiation, but it also gave evidence and verification. It proved beyond doubt that God was fair, just and righteous.

The period from the first sin man committed (Eve and then Adam) until the death of Jesus on the cross had placed God in the position of "*passing over*" the sins done aforesaid. For His own good reasons, 1000's of years had to pass from the first sin until the death of his son. Although time means nothing to God, it still needed to be demonstrated to us. :

But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 2Pet. 3:8-9

The issue centered on how God treated those men and women who had accepted God's condition that he would allow full faith and trust in him to make them righteous. God's righteousness needed to be demonstrated and proved regarding his "passing over" of their sins until the Christ came.

The problem we face with this word is that it is only used here in the Scriptures and we have no other Scriptures to compare our understanding and interpretation. While the term means basically passing over and letting pass, the magnitude of what it is describing is so immense that we must be careful to keep it within the context.

"paresis... pretermission, passing over, letting pass, neglecting, disregarding..." (Thayer, p. 488; 3929).

*"paresis, primarily a letting go, dismissal (akin to *pariemi*, to let alone, loosen,) denotes a passing by or praetermission (of sin), a suspension of judgment, or withholding of punishment..."* Vine p. Vol, 3 p. 166

paresis to let pass by. A passing over, an overlooking of faults. It refers to the putting aside of our sins, without punishment, ... *páresis* is only the passing over of transgression, i.e., the suspension of a penalty and not the removal of it. (Word Study Dictionary: NT: 3929)

Again, since this is the only place in Scripture where this concept is expressed, and the only place in the Bible where this term is used, we must move cautiously and carefully. The first and most important question centers on whether or not this means forgiveness or a simple overlooking and ignoring. Before Christ's death on the cross, there was nothing to use for expiation. Though God had allowed his people to offer animal sacrifices, he admitted later that they did not have any real power to take away sins. There can be no doubt after reading the Tenth chapter of Hebrews that there was no remission. The sins were remembered year by year. Sacrifices were offered to the priests for their sins. Then on the day of atonement, they were again remembered as they were placed on the head of the scapegoat. They were sent into the wilderness, but there was never any indication that they were forgiven or removed.

*For the law having a shadow of the good (things) to come, not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. 2 Else would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins. 3 **But in those (sacrifices) there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Heb. 10:4***

And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins: 12 but he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13 henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the

footstool of his feet. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.
Heb 10:11-14

Therefore there could be no redemption, justification, ransom, or expiation prior to the cross. What then did God do? He simply let them pass and disregarded them. Does this mean that Abraham was not really forgiven? Obviously not if Jesus' account of the rich man and Lazarus is accurate. All those who died before true remission were comforted. Abraham was comforted along with Lazarus. Since a day is to the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day, and since God knew Jesus would die for man's sins, it was just and righteous for him to do as he did. The price would be paid for their sins, but the reality is that they were "passed over" until the sacrificial death of Jesus. For over 3000 years God allowed men and women to enjoy salvation and receive the rewards of being righteous upon the basis of the blood of bulls and goats.

The only way to understand this point is to compare it to how God treated angels and the wicked who refused to repent with how he treated those who trusted him.

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; 2Pet. 2:4-6

When angels sinned, they were cast down to hell (*tartaroo*) to await the judgment. When God saw the evil rebellion of those living in the time of Noah, he poured out his wrath in the flood and destroyed them. When God saw the wicked depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah, he made an example so all could see what happens to those who live ungodly. Before Christ's death upon the cross the lies of Abraham, the drunkenness of Noah, the adultery and murder of David could only be expiated in promise. All the sins of all those who trusted in God could not be appeased. The Christ was coming, but he had not come yet. Until he came, they had the same debts as those who were punished. The only difference was in the rebellious attitude of the wicked and the submissive attitude of those who trusted in him. But their animal sacrifices had not accomplished anything and they had the same debt incurred as the others.

It was not forgiveness, nor was it overlooking. It was "*passing by of sins for the present, leaving it open in the future either entirely to remit, or else adequately to punish them, as may seem good to Him who has the power and right to do the one or the other.*"

If *aphesis* is remission, *paresis* from *pariemi*, will be naturally 'proetermission,' '**—the proetermission or passing by of sins for the present, leaving it open in the future either entirely to remit, or else adequately to punish them, as may seem good to Him who has the power and right to do the one or the other.**(Trench's NT Synonyms NT:3929)

God had promised them forgiveness and he would do it. Christ's death on the cross manifested his righteousness. But before that sacrifice it appears that Satan was continually pointing out to God that the brethren did not have the right to be where they were.

And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. 10 And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night. Rev 12:9-10

Satan knew that God could not simply forget their sin and allow these people to live with him in heaven while he cast all other sinners into hell. His accusations were made day and night. God is not a respecter of persons, and God is righteous. Though those who trust and love him are no longer rebellious, they are in no better position in regard to righteousness than those God destroyed. They owe God just as much as the wicked. God could then be accused of favoritism of being unfair, and of being a respecter of persons. The death of Jesus solved all this.

We have to move so cautiously in this realm. Although we have placed concrete ideas, the truths contained in the passages are much more complicated than our own thoughts and ideas can really

explain or grasp. We can praise God that he has now shown and proven that righteousness so even if we do not fully understand exactly what was done, it has now been done so it doesn't matter anymore.

in the forbearance of God;

God's passing over of the sins done aforetime was "*en - in the midst of*" the "*forbearance*" of God. This seems to take in much more than the previous thought. While the pretermission looks at those who ultimately died having fulfilled the conditions of God's covenant of faith, this term captures the entire human race. Because we do not live in that realm and do not comprehend true righteousness, the concept is beyond us. What God "*normally*" did was cast them down to chains and torment. But what God did to Adam and Eve and their offspring was manifest his "*forbearance*:"

anochē, "a holding back" ... denotes "forbearance." a delay of punishment, Rom. 2:4; 3:25, in both places of God's "forbearance" with men, in the latter passage His "forbearance" is the ground, not of His forgiveness, but of His pretermission of sins, His withholding punishment. In 2:4 it represents a suspense of wrath which must eventually be exercised unless the sinner accepts God's conditions; in 3:25 it is connected with the passing over of sins in times past, previous to the atoning work of Christ. (Vine's Vol 2 p 116)

"*anochē*... used commonly in the plural in classical Greek signifies for the most part, a truce or suspension of arms... it is excellently rendered 'forbearance' on the two occasions of its occurrence in the NT. ... the *anochē* is temporary, transient: we may say that, like our 'truce,' it asserts its own temporary, transient character; that after a certain lapse of time and unless other conditions intervene, it will pass away. ." Trench, Synonyms; p. 199)

This not only completes the view of how God dealt with man prior to Jesus' death on the cross, but how he deals with all mankind who do not obey the gospel. In his previous use of this term, Paul explained exactly how this forbearance worked. This truce lasts while life lasts. Then after life ends, either true remission brings eternal life, or true wrath brings tribulation and anguish.

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 unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds: 7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: 8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; 10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: Rom. 2:4-10

God passed over the sins they did before that sacrifice in forbearance. He held back and delayed, much the same way he does with all men before their death in hope that they will come to repentance. God tolerated and put up with circumstances of which he did not approve. God was waiting for his Son to come and pay for the sins of those who loved him but yet had sinned. He allowed them to receive the same reward as those who had never sinned and lived a righteous and perfect life. All this was done in his forbearance. He tolerated and held back until a different set of circumstances came about. With the death of Jesus and the full price paid, all was forgiven and forgotten and all debts canceled by God who paid for them with the blood of his own son.

26 for the showing, (I say), of his righteousness at this present season:

With the coming of the new covenant, God saw a need to reveal his own just and righteous character. Consequently, in the same book that explained how he changed sinful violators of the law into just and righteous beings, he also explained how he made all previous sinners just. In showing (*demonstration, proof*: same as 3:25), how he makes man righteous he must also show his own justice in forgiving those prior to Jesus death.

For in the very act of manifesting that all had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, the Holy Spirit himself brought up the perplexing nature of this dilemma. He had just proved that God could not save anyone under the old system, because no one kept it. Yet he also clearly revealed that

some had been saved under that system (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, etc.) This is the explanation! Jesus paid it all. With Jesus death on the cross, it is clearly demonstrated and proven that God is just and fair in his dealings with man and with the angelic hosts who have lived before us. With the propitiation in Jesus blood, God can now be just himself and also justify those who were sinners.

that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.

Again an “eis” introduces “the end to which a thing reaches or extends,” “the end which a thing is adapted to attain,” or “the end by which a thing is completed, i.e. the result or effect.” Jesus expiatory death allows God to be just while at the same time choosing the new conditions by which he will justify those sinners who love him. This is so similar to one of Jesus parables, that I include it for your consideration:

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that was a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. 2 And when he had agreed with the laborers for a shilling a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the marketplace idle; 4 and to them he said, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. 5 Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 And about the eleventh (hour) he went out, and found others standing; and he saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard. 8 And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. 9 And when they came that (were hired) about the eleventh hour, they received every man a shilling. 10 And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received every man a shilling. 11 And when they received it, they murmured against the householder, 12 saying, These last have spent (but) one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. 13 But he answered and said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a shilling? 14 Take up that which is thine, and go thy way; it is my will to give unto this last, even as unto thee. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil, because I am good? 16 So the last shall be first, and the first last. Mt 20:1-16

God wanted to be like this landowner. He wanted to be generous, merciful, and kind. His gracious character sought for the means to reward those who wanted a second chance, who truly repented and mourned over their evil conduct. But God must be just. He cannot be a respecter of persons, cannot show favoritism.

Consequently, before God created the heavens and the earth He devised the means by which the Word would become flesh and die in man’s place, giving him the expiatory power to forgive all men. God then chose the criteria upon which all men would be saved. It would be based upon their desire to walk humbly with him (Mic 6:8), to mourn over their condition (Mt 5:3-4), and to trust in him with all their heart (Pr 3:3-5). From the fall of man in the garden (Gen 3:15), God has been revealing this to mankind. He can be just (righteous and fair), while saving those who do as he asks and condemning those who do not. Like the righteous landowner above, it is now his own, and it is lawful for him to do what he wills with his own.

The critical element of this section is the means of paying the debt. Without the payment of the debt, only one of two unfavorable outcomes could occur. Either God would have to be unjust and save people in spite of his law, or he would have to condemn them to hell in spite of his love and compassion. John 3:16 clearly explained how God solved this dilemma.

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.

God loved the world so much that he sent his son to pay that debt in order to keep himself just and still manifest love and compassion to those who were sinners. The only way God could at the same time continue to be just and also justify sinners was to condemn his only son to a horrible, bloody, agonizing death.

So no longer is God simply merciful, compassionate and gracious to forgive us our sins. He is also faithful and just.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1Jn. 1:9

27 Where then is the glorying?

The sad truths revealed up to this point in the book have left all mankind in a clearly unfavorable light. All have sinned and fallen short, all have failed to make use of the law God gave to help them. All stand before God in need of mercy, grace, and compassion. This question seeks to drive home the grave need of man and the rich mercy of God. "Glorying" is excluded. While most uses of pride are of a sinful quality, this one is legitimate. It would include all the things that give us self-esteem and value. The things we have gained by hard work and effort that lead us to feel that we have done something good.

"kauchaomai, kauchema, kauchesis,... the sense of kauchasthai is "to boast," usually in a bad sense, which also attaches to kauchema and kauchesis. If there are occasions for the expression of legitimate pride, to Greek sensibility too loud a trumpeting of one's own renown is a violation of - aidos and the sign of an aneleutheros. Warning against self-glory, and the ridiculing of it are common themes in popular philosophers and satirists... In the OT there are many proverbs against self-glorying or boasting... though places is also found for justifiable pride... Self-glorying, however is not merely a casual fault. In many passages it is regarded as the basic attitude of the foolish and ungodly man... For in it we see that man desires to stand on his own feet and not to depend on God, that he builds on that which he himself can accomplish and control..." (Kittel Vol 3 p 645-646; NT:2746)

kauchesis,... the state of being rightfully proud - 'pride, to be proud.'" (Lou & Nida, Greek-English Lexicon NT:2746)

But is there anything concerning our salvation by faith in Jesus death and propitiation that could lead us to any sense that we accomplished something? The answer is no.

No Jew can boast or consider himself exempt from the need of the gospel. No Jew can foolishly cling to the law as though he is better than every one else and not in need of grace. No Gentile can look upon himself as more philosophically enlightened and having no needs. All have been left in God's debt. No Christian can boast either. The more one learns, the more humble and devoted to God we become.

for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, (it is) the gift of God; 9 not of works, that no man should glory. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them. Eph 2:8-10

The gospel supplies all needs, nothing that we have or can offer to God has any value. There is nothing left for man to glory or boast about. There is nothing left but to humbly repent and seek forgiveness.

So who is doing the boasting here? Is this the Jew or the Christian? Has Paul now moved to the Christian or is he still working on the Jew who needs to obey the gospel and still has his pride to contend with? It depends on what Paul means by what manner of law. If this is still the law of Moses, then he is still working on the sinner who needs to obey the gospel.

What is this law? The context began back in the previous chapter and has never left the discussion of the Law of Moses. A careful look this context makes this crystal clear. As he began to move from the Gentile to the Jew, he contrasted them as those without law and in the law. He is very clear and specific stating that "*Gentiles, who do not have the law,*" and "*called a Jew, and rest on the law.*" He continued speaking to the Jews saying they were, "*being instructed out of the law,*" and "*having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.*" Then showed them that circumcision becomes uncircumcision depending on whether they kept or broke that law. ("*if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision*" and "*even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law.*"). There is no doubt that the law Paul is discussing in the second chapter is the Law of Moses! There is also no doubt that his biting criticism is not for Christians but

for those Jews who had still not obeyed the gospel

12 For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law 13 (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; 14 for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, 15 who show the work of the law written in their hearts, ... 17 Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, 18 and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, 19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, **having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.** ... 23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law ... 25 For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. 26 Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? 27 And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? Rom 2:12-15, 17-20, 23, 25-27

What about the immediate context? Did Paul change his subject or topic? Again, a careful look at the beginning of this section clearly shows he is still speaking to the Jews about the Law of Moses. It is those under the law (of Moses) that the law (of Moses) is speaking. There is only one group that were placed under that law and that the law was describing. The Gentiles were never placed under that law. But for all those who were under that law, the deeds of that law justified no one under it, but only brought to them a knowledge of sin. Apart from the law, but witnessed by the law and the prophets is the righteousness that God has revealed in the gospel. Can this be anything but the law of Moses? Absolutely not. So when Paul returns to the concept of law in verse 27, what law is he speaking of and who is he speaking to? This is still the law of Moses.

Now we know **that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law**, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore **by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.** 21 But now the righteousness of God **apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets**, 22 even the righteousness of God, ... 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. **By what law?** Of works? No, but by **the law of faith.** 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is **justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.** ... 31 Do we then **make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.** Rom 3:19-22, 27-28, 31

But what is “a law of faith?” This is the first time Paul has spoken of the gospel as a law. Is this concept born out by the rest of the Scriptures. It is also called the law of the Spirit of life (Rom 8:2), the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25), and the royal law (James 2:8).

This should not be too difficult to understand. When God spoke of the new covenant, He also spoke of writing His laws in our heart.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Heb. 8:10

clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. 2Cor. 3:3

So a law of faith like the law of Moses is a set of laws based on the New Covenant and the New Lawgiver.

For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ Acts 3:22-23

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen. Mt. 28:18-20

It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works?

Any reason someone might put forth as a reason they have for boasting is now “*excluded*.”

“*ek-klein... to shut out... to turn out of doors: to prevent the approach of one.*” (Thayer p. 195; 1576)

“*ek-kleio “to shut out” (ek, “from,” kleio, “to shut”), (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:1576)*

After reading these first three chapters, what does anyone have to boast about? Each one of us find ourselves in one of the terrible categories. We were either among the first generation apostates and their offspring, wanting to be righteous but actually sinners like all the rest, or of Israel who had squandered all their blessings and crucified their own Messiah. Where is the boasting indeed? If God had not taken the initiative we would all die in our sins as children of wrath even as the rest. We were shut out because we put ourselves outside and without the gospel there is no way back in to any self-esteem.

All boasting is “*shut out*.” There simply cannot be any boasting for we have done nothing to legitimately feel good about. The reason for this is that the “*manner of law*” by which it was set up excludes it.

“*poios... (interrog. Pron., ...)... of what sort or nature...*” (Thayer p 527; 4169)

“*poios “of what sort,” is translated “by what manner of (death)” in John 21:19, ... in Acts 7:49, “what manner of (house)”;* Rom 3:27, “what manner of law”; 1 Cor 15:35, “what manner of body.” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary NT:4169)

The Law of Moses earned salvation and the law of faith received it as a gift based on the death of Jesus on the cross. This is exactly the point Paul will make as he begins the next chapter:

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” 4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. 5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, Rom. 4:1-6

Did Abraham have anything to boast about? NO! He could not boast before God either. Like those under the gospel, Abraham also had faith reckoned as righteousness. There was no basis of boasting for Abraham either.

So works of law (wages) earning righteousness based on our own efforts is not the kind or sort of law that Paul is speaking about here. But he is speaking about the law of faith. The nature of law did not change and Paul is not discussing any change in the nature of law. Only in the nature of the type of law. We are under the law of liberty where forgiveness and redemption are factored into our salvation.

The reality is that the “nature” and “sort” of man’s salvation and God’s gift of righteousness is not based upon a law of “works.”

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

No product of man can produce righteousness and salvation. Nothing that can be *accomplished by hand, art, industry, or mind*.” No “*act, deed, or thing done*” can do it! The law God devised to bring salvation does not depend upon man in any way. Jeremiah dealt with this many years prior to this.

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

God actually designed the gospel with this very thing in mind. There is no room for glory if one has been made righteous by God.

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. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: 31 that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 1Cor. 1:26-31

The system of law that God used to make man righteous was not a law that depended upon works of man. There was no way to keep the Law and earn salvation because man had already sinned and had nothing to pay the debt. There is no longer any place for a law where man could keep himself so pure and clean that God owed him salvation.

for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, (it is) the gift of God; 9 not of works, that no man should glory. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them. Eph 2:8-10

but by a law of faith.

The Spirit selects a stronger “but” than is most often used.

“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)

This “*adversative particle*” gives the “*other things than those just mentioned.*” The method of salvation is not a law of works, it is the exact opposite, it is a law of faith.

God makes a man just and righteous, and the only reason a man can be righteous is because God lowered the conditions. He lowered them to the highest degree still possible. That is exactly what faith does. It makes us want to work as hard as we possibly can to keep all God’s laws given by a new lawgiver. It makes us feel great distress and godly sorrow when we fall short of it and forces us to repent and confess each sin. But it does not remove law. It establishes law!

Since man could not keep ALL his laws and remain just, God devised a system where man could offer God less than perfection, but as close to perfection as he is capable of becoming. Man could not accomplish perfect works, so God had his son die and promised to save those who trusted him enough to do the best they possibly can. Is there any grounds for a boasting in this? Of course not.

28 We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.

The only “logical conclusion” that can be drawn is now offered.

“logizomai... [a favorite word with the apostle Paul, being used (exclusive of quotations) some 27 times in his Epp., and only four times in the rest of the N.T.]. 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)

logizomai, ... to count, reckon, calculate, compute, ... to calculate off hand, ... to calculate the interest, 2. to reckon or calculate that, ... to set down to one's account, charge to one, ... II. without reference to numbers, to take into account, calculate, consider, to form calculations about. ... 2. ... to count, deem, consider that. . to reckon or account so and so, ... 3. to count or reckon upon doing, to calculate or expect that. 4. to conclude by reasoning, infer that a thing is, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:)

By carefully consideration all the facts and informations revealed up to this point in the book, how shall all this be “*calculated?*” “*By reckoning up all the reasons,*” what conclusions ought to be drawn? Paul has us sit down now and add everything up and see what conclusions must now be drawn. Having weighed all the evidence and considered all the facts what conclusions logically

follow? All justification will be given by faith apart from the works of the law. Paul repeated the term used in verse 21 (see page 111) God makes men righteous “*separately*” from the law. God was “*making no use of, having no association with*” law. There was no “*connection or fellowship with*” the law.

This is why the thoughts earlier become so important. Paul is not contrasting law with faith. But a law of works and a law of faith. There is a huge difference between the two. The Law of Moses and all law but the law of faith required absolute perfection. James made exactly the same contrast.

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. James 2:10-13

The law was violated with no remission once anyone “*stumble in one point.*” But the law of faith or the law of liberty required exactly the same obedience, but had grace and mercy factored into it.

When God demanded perfect obedience from Adam and Eve. He commanded them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and warned that the consequences would be death. After they broke his law, God did punish them with death, but he also offered them and all of us a second chance and promised to redeem them if they would trust him (this will be discussed in great detail in chapter five). As God began to work out his plan, he already knew that no man would ever keep be able to keep his laws. He willingly lowered his standard to the level man could still reach and promised to pay the difference. God justified mankind without the need for perfect obedience to law.

Even under the gospel if God demanded perfect obedience, none would be saved. All still sin and fall short even under the gospel. It is here that the heart of this section is revealed and the complete harmony with James. After adding up all the facts, the Spirit did not leave us to draw our own conclusions. He drew them for us. Man would be declared righteous, just, and perfect because God paid for all sin with the blood of his son and then lowered his standards to the point where complete trust and faith in him with the strong desire to be obedient, and great mourning and sorrow for falling short would be considered as righteousness.

This in no way contradicts James clear statements.

What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, 16 and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. 18 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. 24 Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith. 25 And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead. James 2:14-26

While the Spirit through Paul spoke about the manner of law that would save man, through James He spoke of the quality of faith that would be necessary under the law of faith. Through James, God demanded that man must still work. Though some believe God lowered his standards to a point where man need do nothing but believe, and any attempt to do any work nullified God’s plan of salvation, it is false as both James and Paul (in the next chapter) will reveal.

Did God lower Abraham’s standards to a point where all he had to do was believe? NO!! He had to leave his home and come to the promised land. Later he had to offer his son Isaac. Without

those “works” his faith would have been dead. By faith Noah built the ark. Did his work on the ark destroy his faith? Hebrews 11 clearly teaches that it was faith that caused the work and thus revealed the faith to be sound. God did lower his standards, but no more than was absolutely necessary. Though faith and trust in Jesus Christ be in ones heart, all faith must lead to labor and toil and to a continued striving for perfection. God did not remove the goal of reaching after perfection, he simply made it attainable to those who could otherwise never reach it. Anything less than an earnest striving after perfection is not really faith at all.

29 Or is God (the God) of Jews only? is he not (the God) of Gentiles also? Yea, of Gentiles also:

In case there are any who are still not convinced, the section ends with an important point. Since there is only one God, he must be the God of both the Jew and the Gentile. How could it be otherwise? Perhaps those false teachers who were demanding the Gentiles to become Jews were still not convinced. Perhaps those who felt that the Jew must still somehow be better are being rebuked. But since there is only one God, in spite of their idolatry and refusal to acknowledge him, he is still their God simply waiting for their repentance. The Jew was cast off, the Gentile was cast off, now on equal footing they both may return to the one God. There is no need for Gentiles to become Jews. Men are men, and all men need justification. Now that this system of justification has been revealed, it needed by the Jews in exactly the same way as the Gentiles. Since God is the God of all men and all men have the same needs, the natural conclusion follows in the next verse.

30 if so be that God is one, and he shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.

Since God is one, and since he is the same God for both Jews and Gentiles, his method of justification as outlined above shall be the same for both. As one studies the two prepositions Paul selected above to discuss how God justifies the Jew and how he justifies the Gentile, one can find little difference except perhaps in emphasis. God justifies the circumcision by (EK) faith, and God justifies the uncircumcision through (DIA) faith.

“*ek*... It denotes as well exit ... out of, as separation from, ... *from out of, out from, forth from, from*... I. of PLACE,... II of the ORIGIN, SOURCE, CAUSE...” (Thayer, p. 189; 1537)

“*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: ...” (Thayer, p. 132-135; 1223)

The circumcision’s justification “*originates, finds its source and its cause*” in faith. Just as each river flows as a result of its source producing the water so also faith is the source of all justification for the Jew. The cause and the reason for the Jews justification is only due to their faith. The “*means or instrument by which*” uncircumcision’s justification is “*effected*” is their faith. Faith is the source of the Jews salvation and the means of the Gentiles salvation.

31 Do we then make the law of none effect through faith?

Has all that has been written before been for the purpose of making the law of “none effect?” This is the same term that began the chapter in 3:3.

“*katargeo*... 1. *to render idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative*: ...to deprive of its strength, make barren... to cause a person or thing to have no further efficiency; to deprive of force, influence, power, [A.V. *bring to nought, make of none effect*]... 2. *to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish*...” (Thayer, p. 336; 2673)

“*argos* (=a-ergos, ...) means “inactive,” or “inoperative.” It is used in the sense of “incapable of action”... *katargeo*... trans. In the sense of “to render inactive,” to condemn to inactivity”... In the religious sense, which is almost exclusive to Paul, it means 1. “To make completely inoperative” or “to put out of use.” ...” (Kittel Vol 1 p. 452-454)

Is the conclusion to be drawn up to this point in the book that law is now deprived of strength and force? Has it been made “*inactive*” and “*inoperative*?” Does “the law of faith” make law inoperative

and without force. Absolutely not. The law of Christ has just as much power and the law of works ever had. It will justify and condemn based on obedience. The difference is that the law of Christ (faith) offers forgiveness if one sins by repentance and contrition while the law of works demand perfect obedience. That is all that has been affirmed. The concepts of right and wrong have not been done away with. Those who trust God will obviously earnestly desire to keep as many of God's laws as they are capable of.

God forbid (may it never be): nay, we establish the law.

See notes on page 100 for "God forbid." Such a thought must never even enter the mind! Far from rendering law inactive, the Spirit "Establishes" law.

"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, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 307-308; 2476)

Law is even more greatly established by faith. Under law one falls one time and loses it all. Sometimes a "what's the use" attitude might enter the picture. There is nothing I can do now anyway. Under faith, no matter how many times one falls, with repentance they are still pure and are still earnestly desiring to become as perfect as they possibly can while there is still time and life left to do so. Thus under the system of justification by faith God's people will be more firmly established in their desire to keep Gods standards than under any other system.

ABRAHAM: A TEST CASE OF MAN BEING MADE RIGHTEOUS BY FAITH

INTRODUCTION:

In order to fully appreciate this section, we need to remember where the Holy Spirit is in the development of the theme of the book. He is proving conclusively that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe and the only means of salvation left for all.

In the first three chapters, the dismal truth was revealed. Mankind was divided into three into three distinct groups of people, and each group came to the same end. They were all lost due to their own sin and therefore completely dependant upon God's grace (1:18-3:20). God had given them every opportunity. The first generation apostates were allowed to go their own way and every time without exception ended with corruption. Those who had moral sensibilities were allowed to live their lives also, but although they thought they were better, the exact same outcome occurred. Then God's own chosen people that He worked with and gave the Law, but although they had many advantages, they still ended in need of God's grace and mercy. Everyone failed!

So God intervened. (3:21-31), God had a plan to save all men upon a different basis. Instead of perfect works and complete obedience, God offered a sacrifice that would bring the redemption and propitiation through Jesus' death on the cross. This had always been God's plan and would save not only all who live after that sacrifice but also all who lived before.

The Holy Spirit now uses Abraham as a test case. All the Jews knew Abraham was right with God. This chapter explained why he was right with God. He will reveal exactly what it was about Abraham that made him a great man in the eyes of God.

I. Abraham was made righteous in exactly the same way that the gospel now makes men righteous (4:1-8).

II. Abraham revealed the genuine purpose of circumcision (4:9-12)

III. Abraham revealed the true purpose of the law of Moses (4:13-16).

These two doctrines had become very controversial after Paul and Barnabas returned from the first missionary journey. When the report that God had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles was heard, many were overjoyed, but not all. Some of the Jewish Christians had misinterpreted circumcision and the law of Moses to apply to the Gentiles Christians.

And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles. 28 And they tarried no little time with the disciples. 1 And certain men came down from Judaea and taught the brethren, (saying), Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved. 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, (the brethren) appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. Acts 14:27-28; 15:1-2

At Jerusalem, the apostles and elders met with Paul and Barnabas and after a thorough discussion concluded that the Gentiles did not need to be burdened with either circumcision or Moses' law.

Now therefore why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? . . . 19 Wherefore my judgment is, that we trouble not them that from among the Gentiles turn to God; . . . 23 and they wrote (thus) by them, The apostles and the elders, brethren, unto the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting: 24 Forasmuch as we have heard that certain who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment; 25 it seemed good unto us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, . . . 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 29 that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well. Acts 15:10;19;23-25; 28-29

Though this should have ended the controversy, some refused to be bound by the apostles teaching and the Holy Spirit's inspiration. Wherever Paul established a church, it was soon plagued with teachers wanting to bind circumcision and Moses' law on the Gentiles. This provoked the strong warnings by the Holy Spirit concerning how those who rejected his words in Acts 15 ought to be viewed by true disciples.

I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; 7 which is not another (gospel) only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. 9 As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. Gal. 1:6-9

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that, if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. 3 Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4 Ye are severed from Christ, ye would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace. . . .7 Ye were running well; who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth? 8 This persuasion (came) not of him that calleth you;. . .12 I would that they that unsettle you would even go beyond circumcision. Gal. 5:2-4 7-8; 12

Though Rome had not yet been visited by these teachers, God wanted them to have a clear picture of the true meaning of Circumcision and the Law of Moses. He uses Abraham's life to illustrate the truth. Since Abraham was the first circumcised individual. What did it do for him?

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather,

With the term "then" the Spirit reveals a logical connection with what went before.

"oun... a conj. 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... e. it serves to adapt examples and comparisons to the case in hand..." (Thayer, p. 463-464; 3767)

When Paul expanded in the previous section on the opening theme of Romans that God made man righteous on the basis of faith, some things follows necessarily from it that can be seen in the life of Abraham.

But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction; . . . 28 We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. 29 Or is God (the God) of Jews only? is he not (the God) of Gentiles also? Yea, of Gentiles also: 30 if so be that God is one, and he shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith; Rom 3:21-22; 28-30

Abraham is an example of a man who "apart from the law" received "a righteousness of God" "by faith" and proved that "there is no distinction." God's treatment of Abraham shows clearly that it does follow necessarily that a "man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" and that God does in fact "justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith."

To see his line of reasoning as clearly as possible, We will break down this chapter into the four points set forth in the Third Chapter that are now proven through Abraham's life. Remember that these points are intended to "serve to adapt examples and comparisons to the case in hand."

1. All men are justified by faith apart from the works of the law." 3:28

This will be proven in Rom 4:1-8. He will prove that "Abraham believed God and was reckoned righteous." and that David "pronounced a blessing on those whom God reckons righteous apart from works."

2. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ is for all who believe. The circumcision by faith, the uncircumcision through faith; 3:21,30

He will take this up in 4:9-12 by showing that Abraham's "faith was reckoned for righteousness" both when he lived "in uncircumcision." and when "he received the sign of circumcision" as a "a seal of the righteousness he had while in uncircumcision." Since he was righteous while he lived in uncircumcision and after he was circumcised, his life proves that circumcision in itself is not the key to righteousness. One can have Abraham as their father if they have faith as he did whether they are "in uncircumcision" and "in circumcision"

3. But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, 3:21

In Romans 4:13-16, the Spirit elaborates on the above by showing that it was not "through the law" that God gave his "promise to Abraham" "but through the righteousness of faith." He then goes on to show that "if they that are of the law are heirs," then "faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect:"

4. "Being witnessed by the law and the prophets." 3:21

"he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God," "being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform." "Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." "it was not written for his sake alone," "but for our sake also, unto whom it shall be reckoned," 4:17-25

The more familiar we are with Abraham's relationship with God, the clearer God's standards in the gospel become since they are one and the same. The story of his life begins in Genesis 11:27 and continues through Genesis 25:11. It takes up about a fourth of the book of Genesis. He was born in Ur of the Chaldees to Terah who descended from Noah's son Shem (Gen 11:11,24-26), and lived about 2,100 years before Christ's birth. He was called out of Ur, and first went to live in Haran.

And he said, Brethren and fathers, hearken: The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, 3 and said unto him, Get thee out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. 4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, (God) removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell: Acts 7:2-4

From Haran, after Terah death, he was called out of Haran and came into the land of Canaan. Abraham was then 75.

Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee. 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make they name great. And be thou a blessing. 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse. And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 4 So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him. And Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. Gen 12:1-4

God made it clear later, that Abraham was different from others. Though raised in an idolatrous home, he lived a faithful life in the eyes of God.

And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt of old time beyond the River, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they served other gods. 3 And I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac. .. 14 Now therefore fear Jehovah, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and serve ye Jehovah. Josh. 24:2-3; 14

Thou art Jehovah the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham, 8 and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him ... Neh. 9:7-8

But though he was a faithful man no one could affirm that he was a sinless man! He deceived both Pharaoh and later Abimelech about his relationship to Sarai (Gen 12; 20). God did not gloss over these things at the time they were committed, and now makes clear that he is not passing over

them in this section either.

hath found according to the flesh?

The term “hath found” is a perfect active infinitive which describes an action that occurred in the past and the affects of that action continued right up to the present moment. Since it is active, it likely refers to all the things Abraham had done in his life and how he considered them.

“heurisko... to attain to and for ... to find... i.e. 1. Prop. to come upon, to hit upon, to meet with a. after searching, to find a thing sought... b. without previous search, to find (by chance), to fall in with ... 2. Tropically, to find by enquiry, thought, examination, scrutiny, observation, to find out by practice and experience i.e. to see, learn, discover, understand ... to be discovered, to be recognized, to be detected, to show oneself out, used of one’s character or state as found out by others (people, God, or both)... to get knowledge of, to come to know God 3) middle, as in Greek writing, to find out for oneself, to acquire, to get, to obtain, to procure ...” (Thayer p 262; 2147)

What was it that Abraham “*discovered, recognized, and detected*” about himself? How did Abraham’s fleshly life express his “*character or state as found out by others?*” The expression “according to the flesh” is an often used one by Paul and forms a pivotal point that must be grasped. Before looking at the terms involved ponder the following examples of it.

Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. John 8:15

For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, (are called): 1Cor. 1:26

Though we will see in a moment that the term flesh has a multitude of meanings, in this case it seems clear that the meaning centers on the ability and accomplishments one can master through the use of their own physical and mental abilities.

“sarx,... 1. prop. flesh (the soft substance of the living body, which covers the bones and is permeated with blood) of both men and beasts... 2. i.q. the body, not designating it, however, as a skillful combination of related parts... but signifying the material or substance of the living body... a. ... life on earth, which is passed in the body (flesh)... b. used of natural or physical origin, generation, relationship... c. the sensuous nature of man, ‘the animal nature with cravings that incite to sin’: ...3. a living creature (because possessed of a body of flesh)... human nature, the soul included... 4. sarx, when either expressly or tacitly opposed to to pneuma (tou theou) has an ethical sense and denotes mere human nature, the earthly nature of man apart from divine influence, and therefore prone to sin and opposed to God; accordingly it includes whatever in the soul is weak, low, debased, tending to ungodliness and vice...” (Thayer, p. 569-571; 4561)

I quote the entire definition above for two reasons. First to manifest the extreme differences to which this term is put. Second because it is used over 25 times in Romans. Before completing the book we will see nearly every one of these nuances in meaning developed. Here 2a seems to best define it use here. What did Abraham’s “*life on earth, which is passed in the body*” show? What did he accomplish with his fleshly abilities and opportunities? What did the power and strength which inhered in his body of flesh give him? This appears to follow the same line of reasoning offered in other epistles when Paul speaks of himself.

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. Phil. 3:3-6

Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. . . 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. 24 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; 2Cor. 11:18, 21-25

Since his own flesh related to the abilities and attributes he was born with and what he has accomplished with them, it follows that Abraham's flesh would be describing the same thing. Abraham was called by God out of Ur and Haran, and went. He made altars everywhere he moved to, he waited patiently in trusting faith for the promised son, then offered that son at God's command. This is what Abraham found according to the flesh. It thus refers to what he accomplished of his own free will with the abilities God gave him to use.

2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory;

Once again a *“for-gar offers either the reason and cause of a foregoing statement, or some previous declaration is explained.”* This is an explanation of what Abraham found “according to the flesh.” His fleshly “works” did not justify him.

“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)

As with all other people, the fleshly life of Abraham's can be categorized by the work and effort he put forth. Of all the men who have lived, Abraham certainly had a great deal to be proud of and to feel good about. Comparing his efforts with that of others would certainly put him in a very favorable light. With both hand and mind he accomplished a great deal in serving and honoring God by faithful and trusting relationship. Yet when his time comes to stand before the judgement seat to receive the things done in the body what will he find then?

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. 2Cor. 5:10

When God assesses those deeds done in body, will Abraham find that he was “justified” by them?

“dikaioo... 1. prop to make dikaios; to render righteous or such as he ought to be... 2. to show, exhibit, evince, one to be righteous, such as he is and wishes himself to be considered... 3. TINA, to declare, pronounce, one to be just, righteous, or such as he ought to be,... a. with the negative idea predominant, to declare guiltless one accused or who may be accused, acquit of a charge or reproach, ...b. with the positive idea predominant, to judge, declare, pronounce, righteous and therefore acceptable,...” (Thayer, p. 150; 1344)

Will Abraham be able to “show, and exhibit,” himself “to be righteous?” Will his works make him “such as he was and wished himself to be considered?” The construction of this sentence makes it clear that the Spirit expected a negative response to this question. At the end of his life, Abraham had a lot to be pleased with and to have self-esteem.

“kauchema,... very rare in prof. Auth... Sept for ... praise, and ... ornament, beauty... 1. that of which one glories or can glory, matter or ground of glorying... 2. a glorying, boasting...” (Thayer, p. 342; 2747).

but not toward God.

But the sad reality is that Abraham's wonderful life of service and honor did not make him righteous, and gave him no reason to boast toward God. The key to understanding the thought here will center on the difference between the works of the flesh and the faith that prompted them. This is why the Spirit uses the stronger adversative “but.”

“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:... 2. an objection...3. an exception... 4. a restriction...” (Thayer, p. 27-28; 235)

God does not see Abraham as a righteous man based upon works. God could not pronounce him just and righteous on the basis of the life he lived in the flesh. Though Abraham did some wonderful things, and stood far above many others in the human race, it was not enough. At the end of Abraham's life, in spite of all the wonderful things he did, he does not have anything of which to boast toward God.

3 For what saith the scripture?

With another “*gar - the reason and cause of the previous statement is explained.*” Abraham is no different from anyone else in Romans 1-3. He too has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. He too is guilty of all. This is the reason why he has no reason to boast before God, and it is the “*scripture*” itself that offers the reason.

“graphe... a. a writing, thing written... pase graphe every Scripture sc. of the O. T. ... Plur. graphai hagiai, holy scriptures, the sacred books (of the O. T.)... b. .. The Scripture... the holy scripture (of the O. T.), -- and used to denote either the book itself, or its contents... once, hai graphai comprehends also the books of the N. T. already begun to be collected into a canon, ... c. a certain portion or section of holy Scripture... “ (Thayer, Joseph Henry; op. cit., p. 121; 1124)

The Scripture is just another way of saying: “*being witnessed by the law and the prophets*” (Rom. 3:21). Scripture is the term used by the Jews to describe the inspired writings of the Law (Genesis - Deuteronomy) and the prophets (Joshua - Malachi). The Jews greatly revered the OT Scriptures as God’s Word. By asking this question, the Spirit forced them to acknowledge and wrestle with their own Sacred Scripture, much like Jesus did many times during his ministry.

*Jesus said unto them, Is it not for this cause that ye err, that ye know not the scriptures, nor the power of God? Mk. 12:24
I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but (this is done) that the scriptures might be fulfilled. Mk. 14:49
And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears. Luke 4:21
Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; John 5:39*

Though the writings of the apostles were as binding and as authoritative as the Old Testament Scriptures, their use powerfully made points to those who did not necessarily believe in the inspiration of the apostles. It was beneficial for the Jewish Christians in their discussions with others to have Jewish Scripture to back up the revelations the Spirit was giving to the apostles and prophets in the first century.

*For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; 1Cor. 15:3-4
And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 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. 2Tim. 3:15-17*

Whenever one can prove a point by referring back to Scripture in the Old Covenant, they ought to do so. It is the safest and most valuable method of making that point.

And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.

This passage was written by Moses and placed in the book of Genesis. It is a simple statement in a narrative about Abraham’s expressed concern to God that he still has no heir. God made a promise that it was still not too late and Abraham will still have an heir from his own body. When Abraham heard that promise Abraham believed it. When God saw that faith, the Scripture states exactly what Paul quoted above.

And Abram said, O Lord Jehovah, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and he that shall be possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? 3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed. And, lo, one born in my house in mine heir. 4 And, behold, the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, This man shall not be thine heir. But he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6 And he believed in Jehovah. And he reckoned it to him for righteousness. Gen. 15:2-6

This scripture is quoted three times in the New Testament, each time to prove that our

righteousness and our salvation are based on our faith (Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6; James 2:23) and not our human (fleshly) works.

*Even as **Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.** 7 Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham. Gal 3:6-7*

*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. 24 Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith. James 2:22-24*

It is an amazingly simple verse, that strips away all the sophistry of the Jews. What made Abraham special was his faith. It was not his works, except as those works manifested his faith (Jas 2:23). It was only because he “believed” and trusted God fully that God reckoned it to him for righteousness.

“pisteuo... to believe, i.e. 1. intrans. to think to be true; to be persuaded of; to credit, place confidence in; a. univ. to credit, have confidence, to believe one’s words,...” (Thayer, p. 511-512; 4100)

So what had been taught in the Scriptures from the very beginning is now being revealed and explained. What Paul finished describing in the previous chapter is exactly how God did that.

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; Rom. 3:24-25

But the reason why God will reckon a man righteous is not based on the flesh or “perfect works.” It will be based on the faith and trusts that precedes the works. Abraham was reckoned righteous because he believed everything God said. If what God said required action then he did it. If it required submission then he was submissive. If it required trust and confidence then he trusted. He could not give God perfect works because there is no one who can. But God took the next best thing which is the love and trust that will obey. Paul will elaborate further on what God found so special this faith later in this chapter:

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. 4:20-22

When Abraham took God’s words and “*thought them to be true,*” was “*persuaded of;*” gave “*credit,*” and “*placed confidence in*” them, God “reckoned” it as righteousness to him just as he does to the Christian today. This is the third time the term is used in the book, but the first time it is applied to God. As we consider the definition, it is clear that in the NT this is a term for both book keeping and for logical deliberation. Which definition is the most practical and applicable here?

It is clear after reading the definitions that both would fit well in the context here. God has taken our faith and removed all the sins that would have been held to our account through the death of Jesus on the cross, and He has accounted us righteous and with no sin.

“logizomai... In profane Greek there are two distinctive uses. Common to both is the idea of an act of thought according to strict logical rules. A. In commercial dealings... for “reckoning,” and is found as such in the legal language of Demosthenes, then ... for “evaluating” ... When eis is added, it indicates the scale (or currency) used for estimating the value of an object. B. in classical literature logizesthai means to “deliberate, to conclude.” Esp. in Plato it is the typical term for the non-emotional thinking of the philosopher. . .” Kittel Vol 4 p. 284)

logizomai, ... to count, reckon, calculate, compute, ... to calculate off hand, ... to calculate the interest, 2. to reckon or calculate that, ... to set down to one’s account, charge to one, ... II. without reference to numbers, to take into account, calculate, consider, to form calculations about. ... 2. ... to count, deem, consider that. . to reckon or account so and so, ... 3. to count or reckon upon doing, to calculate or expect that. 4. to conclude by reasoning, infer that a thing is, (Liddell and Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:)

The Hebrew term initially selected has just about the same meaning. So we are given essentially the same choice in both Testaments. God considers us in his heart and mind as righteous, because

he had reckoned and imputed us as such. Today it is done through the blood of Christ.

chashav ... This word is largely used, and in slightly different senses. Our translators have rendered it by the word 'think' thirty-seven times; 'imagine,' twelve times; 'devise,' thirty times; and 'purpose,' ten times. Hence it may be gathered that it signifies **a mental process whereby some course is planned or conceived**. Thus, it is applied to the 'cunning' workmen who contrived the various parts of the tabernacle, and refers, not so much to their skill in manipulating their materials as to their inspired genius in devising the arrangements. (Girdlestone, Synonyms of the OT: 2803)

chashab OT:2803, "**to think, devise, purpose, esteem, count, imagine, impute.**" This word appears 123 times in the Old Testament, and it implies any mental process involved in planning or conceiving. ... **Translated as "count," the word is used in a number of ways. It had a commercial connotation, as when land was being redeemed and the price was established,** based on the value of crops until the next year of Jubilee: "Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus..." Lev 25:27. The same idea concerns the provisions for the Levites when Israel offered their gifts to the Lord Num 18:30. **"Count" may imply "to be thought or reckoned."** ... **Those who seek to live for the Lord are "counted" as sheep for the slaughter Ps 44:22.** The foolish person, when he holds his peace, is "counted" as wise Prov 17:28. A theological emphasis exists in God's reward of Abraham, when the patriarch believed God and His word: "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness" Gen 15:6.... **Infrequently, chashab is translated as "impute": "And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it; it shall be an abomination" Lev 7:18.** (Vine's Expository Dictionary OT:2803)

Abraham's faith was taken by God and with *"eis added, it indicates the scale (or currency) used for estimating the value of an object."* In this case the value of the object (faith) is placed on a balance opposite to righteousness. As God carefully views these two he pronouncing that they were the same. He used Abraham's faith as the equivalent for the perfect works of righteousness and declared that faith was of equal value with it. Ponder the magnitude of this revelation which was revealed in the very first book of the Bible. God took Abraham's faith and said I don't see you any differently than a man of perfect works. The faith of Abraham made him righteous in the sight of God!

Hence the theme of the book of Romans is not new. It truly was testified by the law and the prophets. In exactly the same way that Paul was teaching Moses had already taught. There is no difference in Genesis 15:6 and Romans 1:16-17; 3:21-31. The both proclaim that God saves all men and counts them as righteous on the basis of faith. Since "reckoned" is a book keepers term, all the debts on Abraham's account were cancelled by means of his faith, and God considered him debt free. Since sin brings the debt, faith also brings forgiveness.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil (one.) 14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Mt. 6:12-15

If Abraham had been guilty of one sin, he could not have been viewed as being righteous. But God promised him that he would reckon his faith as righteousness and forgive him of all his sins. This chapter is therefore a divine explanation of the full meaning of Genesis 15:6. God took Abraham's faith and paid the difference himself. Faith had no more intrinsic value than the blood of bulls and goats. Abraham was therefore one of those people described in the previous chapter as *"being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 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"* (3:24-25). God passed over Abraham's sins, and he did it because of Abraham's faith! Abraham believed God and it was reckoned on his account as righteousness. God intervened on his behalf. Abraham could not pay the debt of sin that he had incurred in the flesh, so God paid the debt for him. All the Spirit is doing here is revealing how God did it. God used Christ's death to pay for Abraham's sins just as he was using it then to pay for theirs and just as he is using it today to pay for ours.

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

To be certain no one misses the real point here, the Spirit offered a very important point of consideration. He introduces it with a “particle” that is *“adversative, distinctive and disjunctive.”*

“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.. 5. It serves to mark a transition to something new... 6. It introduces explanations and separates them from the things to be explained... 7. After a parenthesis or an explanation which had led away from the subject under discussion, it serves to take up the discourse again... 8. it introduces the apodosis and, as it were, opposes it to the protasis... ” (Thayer, p. 126; 1161)

He offered this *“by way of opposition and distinction; it is added to statements opposed to a preceding statement.”* If Abraham had been a man of perfect works, he would not have needed this gift. No one who earned something should be treated as though they were being specially favored with a gift. Simply put, those that “work” do not need grace.

“ergazomai... 1. absol. a. to work, labor, do work: it is opposed to inactivity or idleness... b. to trade, to make gains by trading ... 2. trans. a. (to work l. e.) to do, work out... with acc. of virtues or vices, (to work l. e.) to exercise, perform, commit... b. to work for, earn by working, to acquire...” (Thayer, p. 247; 2038)

When people “work for” something, they are agreeing that if they labor and do the work, then they will “earn by working” whatever “reward” they agreed to work for.

“misthos... 1. dues paid for work; wages, hire... 2. reward: used-of the fruit naturally resulting from toils and endeavors,... -- of divine recompense... a. in both senses, rewards and punishments... b. of the rewards which God bestows or will bestow, upon good deeds and endeavors...” (Thayer, P. 415; 3408)

When God created man, they were made upright with no need of grace (Ecc 7:29). Each person still begins exactly the same way. If they could continue to live a perfect life with no sin then God would give them eternal life as what they earned. If they perfectly lived God’s righteousness then the “dues paid for work” would have been righteousness. God would reckon them righteous based upon the wages for which they were hired. If that had been the case, there would be no need for “grace” to make them righteous. It would then be of “debt.”

“opheilema... that which is owed; a. prop. That which is justly or legally due, a debt... b. in imitation of the Chaldean... (which denotes both debt and sin), metaph. offence, sin...” (Thayer p 469; 3783)

The concept here is exactly that which Jesus illustrated in one of his parables.

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that was a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. 2 And when he had agreed with the laborers for a shilling a day, he sent them into his vineyard. . . 8 And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. Mt. 20:1-2, 8

After the day of working out in the vineyard the householder needed to pay them for their hire. It was not an act of grace, he owed them for the day’s work. Once the agreement has been set and the people did their part, there would be a legal obligation to pay them.

Then, the parable takes a turn because for everyone else, it was not of debt but of grace. While the people initially hired above received their wages, the rest worked for less time but receive the same wages. They received it as a gift of grace not a debt of wages.

And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. 5 Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. 6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, ... 8 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' 9 And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. 10 But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. 11 And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner, 13 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? 14

Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. 15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?' Mt. 20:3-6, 8-12,

Jesus explains this concept perfectly. The only issue with the parable is that there will be none of the former, although the Jews thought they were they never reached it. This is exactly what the Holy Spirit is affirming. If man could work (live a perfect life and earn salvation) then God would owe it as a debt. He would not need God's grace. But no one could or did. They all received the reward because of God's goodness, not because of their own merit.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly,

With the same "particle" that is "*adversative, distinctive and disjunctive,*" the Spirit now reveals the truth about all men, including Abraham. Everyone who has sinned can no longer work. He can no longer earn it as a debt and must rely instead on grace. Rom 1- 3 has shown clearly that there just isn't anyone like this. All men serving God and seeking righteousness cannot "*work for, earn by working, or acquire*" it with their own efforts. They need God's justification because they are "ungodly."

asebes,... destitute of reverential awe towards God, contemning God, impious..." (Thayer p 79; 765)

This is a terrible indictment of all men. They lacked the holy reference and sacred awe that would have led them to deny themselves and obey God's will. Thus all sinners are not only those who miss the mark, but they are also seen by God as those who have no true love and devotion to him. They did not have enough reverential awe of God to live a life that would have honored and glorified him. When they sinned and fell short of his glory, they became impious and revealed a lack of respect toward him. Yet these are ones God justifies by grace through faith. Later the Spirit will show that Jesus died for all these people.

For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. Rom. 5:6

God's offer is simple. I know you have failed to live up to my glory. I know that you have not always treated me with the respect and honor due. I know you are unworthy and that you were enemies.

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; Rom. 5:8-10

This is the gospel (good news)! If anyone will believe "*think to be true; be persuaded of; credit, place confidence*" on him who justifies the ungodly then something very special will happen.

his faith is reckoned for righteousness.

This is the truth, and the way that it really is. Though the previous verse is a possibility, and man could have been righteous though his own fleshly works, he failed to do it. The only thing left for the ungodly is to be made righteous by means of a gift. The gift is offered (reckoned) on the basis of faith. Every man who looks to God as Abraham did and trusts him as Abraham did will be reckoned righteous on the basis of faith. No one has ever been reckoned righteous on the basis of their fleshly works (except Jesus). Yet Moses isn't the only one who revealed this. David did too.

6 Even as David also pronounceth blessing upon the man, unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works,

The term here translated "even as" is an unusual term used less than fifteen times in the NT. It is a technical term that we would do well to ponder.

"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, p. 312; 2509)

The idea behind it is that it first draws a circle around a group then makes a comparison. The circle the Spirit wants drawn is around the same people Paul just described. Those whose righteousness is based upon grace and faith. David said exactly the same thing about these people with the circle

around them that Paul does here. Like Abraham, David was highly respected by the Jewish nation. He was known to be a prophet. His validation of Paul's point is powerful testimony to the Jew. David pronounced a "blessing" on the same people spoken of above.

"makarismos... declaration of blessedness... to utter a declaration of blessedness upon one... to pronounce on blessed..." (Thayer p. 386; 3108)

This is the same root word Jesus' used in the beatitudes at the Sermon on the Mount. It generally refers to the contentment coming from being right with God, that transcends outward circumstances of this life. The Psalm was written after David had committed a grievous sin (probably in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba in which he had violated three of the Ten Commandments and was worthy of death). He had agonized over this sin for some time and had been crushed by the loss of fellowship he had previously had with God. These words were penned to describe his feelings of blessedness after he was forgiven.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. 3 When I kept silence, my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long. 4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: My moisture was changed (as) with the drought of summer. (Selah) 5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity did I not hide: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Jehovah; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. (Selah) 6 For this let every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely when the great waters overflow they shall not reach unto him. Ps. 32:1-6

Although David was not specifically discussing the "blessing" that is "upon the man, unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works," the Spirit now revealed that this was its real point. When God forgave David "the iniquity of" his "sin," he was admitting that he could never be righteous by his own works. He was then one of the ungodly who needed justification from God by faith, as a gift, and apart from his own works. Like Abraham, David was made righteous on the basis of the blood of Jesus because of his faith and trust in God.

7 (saying), Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, And whose sins are covered.

David keenly felt the damage of his sin. He felt a terrible loss, and dealt with the anguish the destruction of his relationship with God caused. He went from a man after God's own heart to a wicked, corrupt, and evil man. As time passed, he could no longer live without a clean heart and the "joy of salvation." Although the 51st Psalm has been ascribed to David, there is no real evidence. It doesn't really matter though because whether David wrote it or not, it is still applicable to his circumstances.

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. 11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with a willing spirit. Ps. 51:2-3; 10-12

When he returned to God, he was forgiven, and because of the depth of his sorrow and remorse, when he was "forgiven" he knew he was greatly blessed.

"aphiemi... to send from (apo) one's self; 1. to send away; a. bid go away or depart... b. to send forth, yield up, emit... c. to let go, let alone, let be; AA to disregard:... BB to leave, not to discuss now, a topic, used of teachers, writers, speakers, etc.: Heb 6:1... D to let go, give up, a debt, by not demanding it... i.e. to remit, forgive..." (Thayer, p. 88-89; 863).

God sent David's sins away from him. He let the debt go and did not demand it. God also "covered" them.

"epikalupto... to cover over; ... are covered over so as not to come to view, i.e. are pardoned..." (Thayer p. 239; 1943)

The guilt for the sin committed by David had been covered over. There were consequences to his sin, but the sin itself was forgiven:

And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against Jehovah. And Nathan said unto David, Jehovah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. 14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. 2Sam. 12:13-14

What a spiritual sigh of relief and breath of fresh air this forgiveness is to the one who comes to God with remorse and sorrow. This is what Jesus sought to capture in the first two of his own beatitudes.

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Mt. 5:3-4

David believed that his own blessedness came when his poverty of spirit and mourning over his sins led him to be forgiven for his sins. He did not want to be repaid for what he had earned. He did not want what he had worked for and deserved. He longed for God's grace and mercy.

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

8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin.

For the fifth time in this chapter the term "reckon" is used. "to reckon, count, compute, calculate," and "count over." Here it is used in the negative. When it comes to sin we do not want God to "take into account," or "make account of" it. David pronounced a blessing upon those whom God had wiped sin from their account.

By using both Abraham (the Law) and David (the prophets), the Spirit has now witnessed to the truth that God's salvation is "faith reckoned for righteousness" and that "God will not reckon sin." Now that it has been proven that two of the greatest men Israel ever produced were saved by the same means Paul is proclaiming through the gospel, and that the Law and the prophets teach exactly the same thing he is teaching here, it will be more difficult for Jews to reject it.

Yet this is not only for the Jews, but also for Christians. No one will stand before God without the blessedness of His not reckoning sin. If both Abraham and David, two of the greatest men found in the Old Covenant needed to be saved in this manner, so also do all of us. Only complete faith and trust in the gospel can bring this about.

Having proven that these two great men depended upon the same means of justification that the gospel proclaimed, he will now use these same two men to prove that circumcision and uncircumcision had no bearing on God's doing offering this blessing to man.

2. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ is for all who believe. The circumcision by faith, the uncircumcision through faith; 3:21,30

9 Is this blessing then pronounced upon the circumcision, or upon the uncircumcision also?

When The Holy Spirit through David said "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin," He was actually pronouncing this blessing upon every "man unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works." Throughout the history of the Jewish nation, this was the only hope for anyone. As noted in the first few chapters no one will ever stand before God without needing this blessing.

What is being now asked is whether circumcision has any bearing on this blessing. Since this was a controversy raging at that time among the Jews, the Spirit chose this moment to introduce the same question that had been asked at the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15. Was it necessary for

the Gentiles to be circumcised had been answered with a resounding NO, first by Peter, then by Paul and Barnabas and finally by James. That is the purpose and reason for this question.

Do you have to be circumcised in order to receive this blessing or not? Are only those who have their fleshly foreskins removed eligible for this blessing?

for we say, To Abraham his faith was reckoned for righteousness.

Once again the Spirit quotes Genesis 15:6. The repetition seems to indicate the importance that this idea holds to this point. Since Scripture cannot be broken, and this verse had existed for over a thousand years. No one can quibble that it is a part of God's divine word. Thus it is an undeniable fact to any who believe that Scriptures are God's word that Abraham was in fact reckoned righteous on the basis of his faith. Since this is now undeniable, it proves that circumcision has no inherent value or benefit.

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

The Spirit again uses "*oun... a conj. indicating that something follows from another necessarily*" to reveal the logical connection between the previous question and this one. When Abraham was reckoned righteous on the basis of his faith it follows necessarily that we ask whether he was circumcised or uncircumcised when it occurred. To answer it yourself ponder the chronology of Abraham's life.

*And Abram was **seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.** Gen 12:4*

*And Abram said, O Lord Jehovah, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and he that shall be possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? 3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed. And, lo, one born in my house in mine heir. 4 And, behold, the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, This man shall not be thine heir. But he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6 **And he believed in Jehovah. And he reckoned it to him for righteousness.** Gen 15:2-6*

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

*And when **Abram was ninety years old and nine**, Jehovah appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am God Almighty. Walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. . . .10 **This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee. Every male among you shall be circumcised.** 11 And ye shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin. And it shall be a token of a covenant betwixt me and you. . . .24 And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. Gen 17:1-2 10-11; 24-26*

From these verses the answer is obvious. Abraham was 75 when he entered Canaan, and even before the birth of Ishmael at the age of 86, he had already been pronounced righteous by faith. Since the covenant of circumcision did not come until he was 99, he had been pronounced righteous while in uncircumcised and continued in uncircumcision for at least thirteen years!

11 and he received the sign of circumcision,

Circumcision was the "sign" he received from God. It was God's idea to give the covenant of circumcision after he had given the promise and had already reckoned him as a righteous man.

"semeion... a sign, mark, token; 1. universally that by which a person or a thing is distinguished from others and known." (Thayer p 573; 4592)

In the NT *semeion* occurs for certain 73 times, and also in the secondary v. Matt 16:3. It is used 10 times in Mt., 7 in Mk., 23 in Luke (Luke 10 and Acts 13), 24 in John (John 17 and Rev 6), 8 in Paul and once in Hb. (Kittel, TDWNT NT:4592)

God asked Abraham to be circumcised as "*a sign, mark*" and "*token*" by which he would be

“distinguished from others.” Circumcision God’s token that he was different from others.

We have many such things today. When one must pay to enter, a ticket is given as a token they paid and have a right to be there. Other tokens might be a stamp on the hand, a badge, or a colored shirt that distinguishes them from others. The purpose of a token is to provide proof that they have paid the price to enjoy the benefits. It marks them out from others. It is therefore a sign.

Just as Paul used a special signature on his letters as a token of genuineness, and the Lord allowed those who were preached the truth to perform miracles to confirm their preaching, so also circumcision was a sign for Abraham.

The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. II Th 3:17

And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen. Mark 16:20

Abraham was already special. He had already been faithfully serving God for 24 years before he received it. It was the faith he already had and that was reckoned to him as righteousness that motivated God to give him the sign (token) to show he was special.

a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision;

Not only was Abraham’s circumcision a sign. It was also a “seal.”

“sphagis... a seal; i.e. a. the seal placed upon books... b. a signet-ring:... c. the inscription or impression made by a seal... d. that by which anything is confirmed, proved, authenticated, as by a seal, (a token or proof)...” (Thayer p 609; 4973)

This is generally an embossing or stamping that one uses to confirm, prove, or authenticate something. Many times wax is poured to seal and envelop and then the king’s signet ring is used to put a special character that everyone can recognize as coming from him. In this case God gave circumcision to “confirm, prove, and authenticate” that Abraham was righteous. Circumcision authenticated God’s pronouncement that he was righteous.

A wedding ring fulfills the same basic function today. Two people are married when they fulfill the civil code for marriage and commit to remain together until their death. In our culture rings are exchanged as an outward sign, a distinguishing mark, an authentication and confirmation to others that they are married. It does not marry them, it is not something that makes the vows any more binding or the marriage more enduring. It is simply a sign. Even the passage that gives circumcision makes that clear.

And ye shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin. And it shall be a token of a covenant betwixt me and you. Gen 17:11

The Hebrew term in Gen 17:11 meant exactly the same thing as the Greek term used here in Romans, it is also the same term God used earlier to describe the rainbow.

a sign, mark, or token, which brings to mind, shews, or confirms anything either past, present, or to come; which excites attention or consideration; which distinguishes one thing from another; or is an inducement to believe what is affirmed, professed or promised.” (Wilson OT Word Studies p 394)

*I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a **token** of a covenant between me and the earth. 14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that **the bow shall be seen in the cloud**, 15 And **I will remember my covenant**, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 And the bow shall be in the cloud. And **I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature** of all flesh that is upon the earth. 17 And God said unto Noah, **This is the token of the covenant** which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth. Gen 9:13-16*

Just as the rainbow was the token and sign of the covenant between God and the earth, so also circumcision was given to Abraham a token and a sign of the righteousness he had before he received it.

that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be in uncircumcision,

Even at that time it was part of God's plan to use it in this way. The Spirit uses the preposition "eis" to express "entrance into, or direction." This was the purpose and end that God had in view.

The ultimate object and purpose to giving circumcision in exactly the manner That he did was so it could be used at this time to explain circumcision after it was removed. This was the "end which" circumcision "was adapted to attain." Beginning in Ur and never wavering through his long years in Canaan Abraham trusted God completely. As a reward God made him the father of all that would afterward believe.

God could have asked Abraham to be circumcised in Gen 12:1-3 as a condition of his service to him, but God waited for this very purpose. He wanted Abraham to be the father of all future believers until the end of time. Consequently for a portion of Abraham's life, he was all a man could be while in uncircumcision. Then, at the age of 99, God asked Abraham to be circumcised to begin his called out chosen people. Abraham then lived out the remainder of his life as an example to those who would live after him in circumcision. Circumcision changed nothing as far as Abraham's righteousness or his relationship to God was concerned. It simply began a new covenant relationship for him and his offspring as the chosen people through whom the seed which would bless all the nations of the earth would come.

The point is clear. Abraham is the father of all uncircumcised believers because during a portion of his life he was righteous while uncircumcised. All that Abraham did during that period of his life is an example that believers who are uncircumcised can follow. This was a part of God's eternal purpose. He wanted Abraham to be righteous by faith while in uncircumcision because he knew there would be multitudes of people from the uncircumcision over whom he wanted Abraham to be the father.

When he was finally circumcised, it did not confer any special privilege to him. It was only the sign and seal of what he already had! It did not make him a better person, and it did not remove him as the father of the uncircumcised. Abraham is now the father of all uncircumcised believers who trust and submit to God as he did while uncircumcised. He was not just the father of the circumcised Jew. Though the Jews wanted to make circumcision their exclusive right to Abraham, they were wrong to do so. He was uncircumcised for many years and consequently, Abraham is just as much a father to the uncircumcision as he is to the circumcised.

that righteousness might be reckoned unto them;

With another that - "eis" he gives the second end and purpose that God intended. He wanted it clearly revealed that uncircumcised believers can have the same righteousness reckoned to them as circumcised believers do. Righteousness can be reckoned to the uncircumcised in exactly the same way it was to Abraham while he lived in uncircumcision. They are the uncircumcised children of the uncircumcised Abraham if they have the same faith he did while uncircumcised.

12 and the father of circumcision to them who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had in uncircumcision.

Abraham was also the father of all the circumcision. Yet lest they mistake this for physical lineage, the Spirit removed even that possibility. Their kinship to Abraham was never based exclusively on their circumcision or even on their blood tie to Abraham. Both John and Jesus and Jesus dealt had already dealt with this while they were on the earth.

*He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy repentance, and **begin 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.** 9 And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees: **every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.** Lk. 3:7-9*

*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. John 8:39-44

Circumcision was only a start. It had to be done on the eighth day to all males who were physical descendants of Abraham in order for them to remain in covenant relationship with God . It was the sign and token of their covenant. If they failed at this then they were cut off from their people. But in order to truly enter into a covenant relationship, and manifest true kinship to Abraham, they needed to walk in the same steps that Abraham did. Every time God put him to the test he trusted God. This is what God needs to see in any individual in order to reckon righteousness to them. It is also what it takes to become and remain the true children of Abraham.

3. But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, 3:21

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; Rom. 3:21-23

As noted in the introductory comments to the chapter(4:1), this section is an elaboration and explanation of Paul's first major conclusion in the book. God has offered the means of becoming righteous to both the Jew and the Gentile "*apart from the law.*" This was the one thing that kept some Jewish Christians from accepting Gentiles. Some felt compelled to go out and demand that the Gentiles keep the law. These people could not comprehend how anyone could be considered righteous by God if they did not keep the code of conduct set forth by Moses. Though this explanation is short in comparison to what he told the Galatians, and the Corinthians (2Cor. 3:5-18), there are some important points that elaborate on these other passages.

13 For not through the law was the promise to Abraham

Although there is no direct article before "law" until verse sixteen, the context of the section makes it very clear that the law of Moses is the subject under consideration. First, because the Spirit again begins with "*gar - the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added, or some previous declaration is explained.*" The previous section dealt with the fact that circumcision was not a moral imperative. Abraham was righteous both while uncircumcised and after becoming circumcised. The unspoken point is now brought out. The controversy of the day centered on the fact that the law of Moses required circumcision, and that once circumcised one was obligated to keep the law of Moses.

And certain men came down from Judaea and taught the brethren, (saying), Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved. Acts 15:1

But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses. Acts 15:5

Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. Gal. 5:3-4

Since this verse is a "*reason and cause of the foregoing statements,*" and since the previous statements had to do with circumcision which had become a part of the law of Moses, it is obvious that it is a law that deals with circumcision that is under discussion and the law of Moses is that law.

It was not "through" the law of Moses that the promise was given to Abraham.

"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... by the service, the intervention of, by means of, with the help of..." (Thayer, p. 132-135; 1223)

God did not use the law of Moses as the "means or instrument" through which the promises would be given to him. This point could not be argued.

Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17 Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect. 18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise: but God hath granted it to Abraham by promise. Gal 3:16-18

Abraham never knew about the law. He was never asked to keep it and God never mentioned it to him. There was no way that the law could have had anything to do with the promise God gave to Abraham.

or to his seed

Though the addition “*or to his seed*” could apply to the Christ as it did in Gal. 3:16, it is much more likely that Paul is referring to all those men and women who would later become his children on the basis of their faith. This is the same use Paul made of it in Gal 3:26-29, where his seed referred to all the true offspring of who believed as he did.

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. 7 Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham. Gal 3:6-7

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

God intended that Abraham's offspring would receive the same blessings that Abraham received and that they would receive them in exactly the same way.

that he should be heir of the world,

A lot of ingenuity has gone in to understanding how Abraham should be “heir” of the world.

“kleronomos... properly one who receives by lot; hence 1. an heir... b. in Messianic usage, one who receives his allotted possession by right of sonship: so of Christ.. all things being subjected to his sway... 2. The idea of inheritance having disappeared, one who has acquired or obtained the portion allotted him...” (Thayer, p. 348-349)

The difficulty is in finding a passage in Genesis, or anywhere else in the Bible that promised that he would receive the world as his “allotted possession.” The only passage that describes Abraham's state of mind when he left his homeland to come to Canaan to receive something does not mention the world.

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a (land) not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Heb 11:8-10

It is clear from from this verse that Abraham had two hopes when he left Ur. The first was to inherit the land of Canaan for his descendants as the land where they would dwell. The second was that he would receive his place in a city who's builder and maker is God. From these two passages, it is clear that there was more to God's promise to Abraham than the land of Canaan and the nation whom he would father to live in it. This is later restated in speaking of both Sarah and Abraham and all who lived before them.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. 15 And if indeed they had been mindful of that (country) from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better (country), that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city. Heb 11:13-16

This passage clearly expressed that all who lived during what we call the patriarchal age when ended with the Law given at Sinai had the same ideas and promises about what their service to God would mean to them. God had been very clear that he would richly bless those who served him with a reward that made them feel they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. It made them desire a better country. Since Moses was born under the Patriarchal age and the law was not given until he was over 80 years old, He too can be counted and his views at the time he left Egypt were also handed down from the patriarchs. He too looked for a reward.

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the

reward. Heb 11:24-26

If the Spirit had said city or country here instead of world there would be far less difficulty understanding what was meant. Nowhere else does it say that Abraham was to inherit the “world.”

“kosmos... 1... *an apt and harmonious arrangement or constitution, order...* 2. *ornament, decoration, adornment...* 3. *the world, i.e. the universe...* 4. *the circle of the earth, the earth...* 5. *the inhabitants of the world...* particularly the inhabitants of the earth, men, the human race... 6. *the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ...* 7. *worldly affairs; the aggregate of things earthly; the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments, riches, advantages, pleasures, etc., which, although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ...*” (Thayer p 356-357; 2889)

As is evident from the number of definitions, its meaning must be determined from the context. God had only promised the physical land of Canaan so it is not likely to refer to the physical earth at all. The most probable explanation is described by Peter.

But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. 2 Pet 3:13

It is this new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells that the seed of Abraham will inherit after this life is over. Paul will shed further light on this subject later on in the book of Romans.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for (our) adoption, (to wit), the redemption of our body. Rom 8:18-23

When Abraham left Ur and then Haran, he went to receive a promise of a city and country that God would build and make. It is evident that not only did he know about the city and the country, but also the new creation in which it would exist. All those who trust God as he did will also receive the same thing. But all this did not come through the law.

but through the righteousness of faith.

To emphasize the contrast the adversative particle “*alla*” stresses “*other things than those just considered.*” It is not through the law, but on the contrary through the righteousness of faith. Again “*dia*” is used to give the real and genuine “*means or instrument*” through which the promise came to Abraham and to all the seed. It came not from law, but through the same method as has been expressed in the theme of the book of Romans. It came by means of the righteousness of faith. Abraham received the promise because he trusted God and God reckoned that trust as righteousness to him. What else could it have been but that? That is all Genesis ascribes to him. There was no Law of Moses and circumcision came too late to be anything more than a sign.

The three great things recorded about Abraham in Genesis and cited again in the New Testament Scriptures all focus on his faith and trust, not the Law of Moses. He left Haran and came to Ur by faith (Heb. 11:8), he trusted God and it was reckoned as righteousness to him by faith (Gen. 15:6), and he revealed his willingness to sacrifice his son to God by faith (Heb. 11:17). This was how the promise was offered to Abraham and to his seed who “*walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham*”(Rom 4:12).

14 For if they that are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect:

With another “*gar - the reason and cause of a foregoing statement is added, or some previous declaration is explained.*” It is not just from an historical perspective that the law could not have anything to do with being an heir. There are also some powerful doctrinal and ethical reasons as

well. The key term to help interpret the verse is “*of none affect.*”

“*katargeo...* 1. *to render idle, unemployed, inactive, inoperative: ...to deprive of its strength, make barren... to cause a person or thing to have no further efficiency; to deprive of force, influence, power, [A.V. bring to nought, make of none effect]...* 2. *to cause to cease, put an end to, do away with, annul, abolish...*” (Thayer, p. 336; 2673)

“*argos (= a-ergos, ...)* means “inactive,” or “inoperative.” It is used in the sense of “incapable of action”... *katargeo...* trans. In the sense of “to render inactive,” to condemn to inactivity”... In the religious sense, which is almost exclusive to Paul, it means 1. “To make completely inoperative” or “to put out of use.” ...” (Kittel Vol 1 p. 452-454)

If those who keep the law of Moses are heirs to the promise to Abraham then the promise has been “deprived of its strength,” “force, influence and power.” In another place where this term is used, Paul makes it clearer.

*Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, **no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto.** 16 Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17 Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise **of none effect.** 18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise: but God hath granted it to Abraham by promise. Gal. 3:15-18*

God made a covenant with Abraham, and that covenant had nothing to do with the law of Moses. It was a binding contract between Abraham and God and when God gave the law 430 years later, it had absolutely no affect on that covenant of promise made between them. The illustration of any man made covenant is especially powerful. Once two men enter into an agreement and finalize and promise to do it, no one can come along later and change or void it later. If this is true with men, how much more true with God. Abraham did exactly what God asked him to do and God swore with an oath that he would fulfill his promise to Abraham. It was therefore a covenant of promise.

For when God made promise to Abraham, since he could swear by none greater, he sware 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: Heb 6:13-18

There are therefore two immutable(unchangeable) reasons why it cannot be through the law. First, God said it would be by the promise based on faith, and he cannot lie, and second God swore by himself and interposed with an oath. God cannot break such a promise that was confirmed with an oath in His own name! It is now impossible for God to change this.

Yet if the law had modified the promise and added itself as a condition for being made righteous then that would be exactly what God would have done. He would have changed the condition from reckoning a man righteous on the basis of his faith, to making a man righteous on the basis of perfectly keeping the law. They are entirely different systems of justification and righteousness. To institute the law as the means of righteousness would of necessity create a situation where:

faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect:

While Abraham lived, God reckoned him righteous on the basis of faith because he could not keep the moral code that existed at that time. If at the time of Moses, God had changed that to keeping the law, then he would have raised the standard back up to perfect obedience and faith would have been “made void.”

“*kenoo...* 1. *to empty, make empty;...* 2. *to make void i.e. deprive of force, render vain, useless, of no effect...* 3. *to make void, i.e. cause a thing to be seen to be empty, hollow, false...*” ((Thayer, P. 344; 2758)

If Abraham’s seed(the Jews) had been required to keep the law in order to be righteous with God,

then at that very moment, the system of righteousness being granted by grace through faith would have been “*deprived of force, rendered vain, useless and of no effect.*” That is how distinctly different the two systems are. They are mutually exclusive of each other. One nullifies the other. One is righteousness by forgiveness and salvation by grace and redemption the other is righteousness by works of merit and thus being earned has no need of grace and redemption.

God can't do that! He cannot make promises and swear oaths to do it by faith and then 430 years later change all the rules for the seed of Abraham and force them to comply with a law that they could not keep. Those Jews who thought this to be the case were simply not thinking clearly. As Peter came to understand after the conversion of Cornelius:

And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; 9 and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they. Acts 15:8-11

The very promise of God would be rendered idle, inactive, and inoperative if law were made the basis of salvation. It would simply cease to have any value, it would be annulled and abolished if God turned around and changed from faith to perfect law keeping.

15 for the law worketh wrath;

With another “*gar - the reason and cause of the foregoing statement is added, or some previous declaration is explained.*” Another reason why the law could not be added to the promise centered on the grave consequences to man if God had made such a change. While the righteousness reckoned by faith brings grace, mercy and redemption to Abraham's seed, because “*all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,*” the law could not bring anything good, it could only “work” wrath.

“katergazomai... a. to perform, accomplish, achieve [RV often work]... b. to work out... i.e. to do that from which something results... bring about, result in,... c. ... to fashion, i.e. render one fit for a thing...”
(Thayer, P. 339; 2716)

This is the sad reality of man's plight. With the coming of Moses and the formal organization of the seed of Abraham's seed into a nation, God gave them the true standards upon which man would have to live in order to live a righteous life.

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. 18:4-5

and the law is not of faith; but, He that doeth them shall live in them. Gal 3:12

If they could have walked in these ordinances, done them and lived in them, then they would have been righteous. But those who could not live up to them were condemned. That is what the law did. It actually performed, accomplished and achieved wrath. All that resulted from God's giving the law was that every man sinned and fell short of it and it made salvation by faith that much sweeter and more desirable which was exactly its purpose.

*10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, **Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them.** . . . 19 What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made; (and it was) ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. . . . 22 **But the scriptures shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.** 23 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 3:10, 19, 22-25*

Even those who were under the law had to understand these things. Even under the law they were forced one to rely upon the grace and mercy that could only be found by a righteousness reckoned

by faith. This is exactly what David was quoted as understanding when he said blessed is the man whose transgression is covered and whose sins are forgiven.

Without that forgiveness and mercy, the wrath of the law fell on David. It fell on Moses and Aaron. It fell on all me who have sinned and fallen short of it. Who in their right mind would want God to modify his promise to Abraham and make it so much harder that it would be impossible for anyone to attain to righteousness? Yet this is exactly what the Jews were clamoring for when they sought to keep the law.

but where there is no law, neither is there transgression.

This is the reason why law produced wrath. The more standards God demanded, the more transgressions man would commit. In the garden there was only one law and therefore only one possible transgression. As God gave more and more laws, more and more transgressions were possible. With the giving of the law of Moses with multitudes of statutes and ordinances, the working of wrath intensified.

The real point is seen when we compare the whole thought. *“but where there is no law, neither is there transgression. For this cause (it is) of faith, that (it may be) according to grace.”* As we ponder these contrary thoughts, what is the real tie? What is the true comparison? The reason this statement is here is to force us to conclude that it must be of faith so that it can be according to grace. The law of Moses is God’s record of the holiness and righteousness he expected man to live. That record testified to the depth of transgression man had fallen into. The reason it was given was to keep Israel separate and show them what God’s true requirements were. But it also led to an increase in man’s sin. If man could have kept it, he would have been righteous, since he could not, it only increased his sorrow and guilt.

The problem was not the law, nor was it God’s expectations. It was man’s weakness and instability. The law only made it more obvious just how much we needed the grace and mercy of faith.

Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law. 22 But the scriptures shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. Gal 3:21-22

7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Howbeit, I had not known sin, except through the law: for I had not known coveting, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet: . . . 10 and the commandment, which (was) unto life, this I found (to be) unto death: 11 for sin, finding occasion, through the commandment beguiled me, and through it slew me. 12 So that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good. 13 Did then that which is good become death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might be shown to be sin, by working death to me through that which is good;-- that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful. Rom 7:7, 10-13

Since law brings transgression, those who wish to escape transgression must find a system of righteousness that replaces it. This is what God offered to do with the gospel. To replace law and wrath with faith and grace. This is the point. If one wishes to find a place of purity and righteousness before God then they must find a place where law does not reign supreme. There is only one such place bought and paid for with the blood of Jesus.

16 For this cause

This phrase is made up of the Greek terms *dia* and *touto* which emphasizes that this is the reason for what precedes.

*dia... of the Ground or Reason on account of which anything is or is not done by reason of, because of... 2. Of the reason or cause on account of which anything is or is done or ought to be done a. in the phrase *dia touto*, for this cause; for this reason; therefore; on this account; since this is so...” (Thayer p 134; 1223)*

*touto... the neuter *touto* a. Refers to what precedes... *dia touto*. . .” (Thayer p 467; 3778)*

Because the law cannot be used to justify anyone since it only brings transgression (4:15)
because the law only brings wrath (4:15)
because it would make the promise of no effect breaking God's promise, covenant, and sworn oath (4:14)
because it was not through the law but through the righteousness of faith (4:13)
because the blessing is pronounced upon both the circumcision and the uncircumcision (4:9)
because David pronounced a blessing on the man whom God reckons righteousness apart from works (4:9)
because the Scripture said Abraham believed God and it was reckoned for righteousness (4:3)

For all these reasons that have already been discussed, it must be of faith and cannot be of the law!

(it is) of faith,

The term "of" is the same term used twice in the theme of the book:

*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*

"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)

Literally then "for this cause (*it is*) out of faith." The source, origin and cause of salvation is out of faith, and not out of law! Justification must be upon the basis of faith because of all the reasons given above.

that (it may be) according to grace;

The reason for the above is now made clear. It must be of faith "that" is may be according to grace.

"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)

What began as an adverb that describe the place where one was going became a logical term for the destination in direction and intent of the speakers words. This is where the Spirit wants us to go with all the above reasoning. This is the "intent, end and purpose" for all the above.

God's reckoned righteousness on the basis(out of) faith so he could offer grace to man. This was God's purpose, intent and end for making righteousness available by faith instead of law. Faith introduces grace to mankind. When God counts a man righteous on the basis of his trust and fidelity on the basis of grace, the wrath of the law is removed by grace. He uses according to "kata, to denote reference, relation, proportion, of various sorts in proportion to, according to the measure of" something. When righteousness reckoned by faith is placed on one side of the balance then "grace" can be placed on the other. Remember that grace is "charis... grace; which affords joy, pleasure, delight, good will, lovingkindness, favor: of the kindness of a master towards his inferiors, of God towards men and kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved."

The comparison now becomes clear. In verse 15 God placed justification by Moses' law on one side of the balance and wrath and transgression on the other. Here it is justification by faith on one side and grace on the other.

to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed;

With an "eis" the Spirit now "denotes the end which a thing is adapted to attain or the end which one has in view, i.e. object, purpose" The reason why God did all the above was for one specific end or purpose which God had in view from the very beginning. It was always God intention to make the promise "sure" to all the seed.

"bebaios... stable, fast, firm... metaph. sure, trusty... unshaken, constant..." (Thayer p 99; 949)

God did everything necessary to make sure that the promise would be available to all the seed. He set up a system by which every one who sought God out and trusted in him would have access to the promise.

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. 1Tim. 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. 2Pet. 3:9

not to that only which is of the law,

The law was the tutor to bring them to Christ. God had given the law to safely keep them separate from the gentile nations so the Christ might come. The law had admirably done its part, but it had not been given to supplant or supplement the righteousness given by faith. God want to show grace to those under the law so he continued to reckon righteousness upon the basis of faith. This is what made the promise sure to them. All they had to do was trust God with all their heart and not lean on their own works and wisdom and the promise was fast and firm for them.

but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all

Just as God saw Abraham and called him out of Ur and Haran, there are many others of the same type. These are the ones described in 1:20-21 who see the things that are made and begin to grope and seek for God. God will not fail or forsake anyone who has the “*ek*” faith of Abraham. Anyone, among the law or the Gentiles who had the same quality of faith in his heart as Abraham had would be offered the benefits of the promise. Abraham was great because of his faith. Those in any nation who sought to imitate that faith would also be acceptable. Just as all children have the characteristics of their parents, so here those whose spiritual qualities made them similar to Abraham become his children. To these children, God desired to offer the same opportunity as those who were produced by the law. Abraham is just as much a father to those not under the law who manifest his spiritual qualities of faith as those under the law who manifest that same quality.

4. “Being witnessed by the law and the prophets.” 3:21

Many of the statements in this final portion of chapter four come right out of the book of Genesis. So this final section confirms what was witnessed in the Law.

“he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God,” “being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.” “Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.” “it was not written for his sake alone,” “but for our sake also, unto whom it shall be reckoned,” 4:17-25

Even the law testified to the truth that all who possessed Abraham’s faith would become his children. It also elaborated on the depth of Abraham’s faith, and its precious nature in the sight of God.

17 (as it is written, A father of many nations have I made thee)

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, Jehovah appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am God Almighty. Walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3 And Abram fell on his face. And God talked with him, saying; 4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but they name shall be Abraham. For the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee. 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. Gen. 17:1-6

God appeared to Abram when he was 99 to inform him that the waiting was over. He revealed to him that his name was now changed to Abraham because he was to become the father of a multitude of nations. It is not until verse six that God also promised that nations would come of him (Ishmael, Israel (Jacob) and Edom (Esau)).

The Spirit now reveals the true intent and meaning of these words. It did not apply to the physical

offspring or the nations that came from his loins. It did not mean that only of Ishmael, Israel, and Edom, and their descendants would he become the father. It did not exclude all the others who did not have a physical lineage to him. Those of Shem Ham, and Japheth who were not directly related by blood to Abraham would still become his children if they had the spiritual character of Abraham.

When God gave this prophecy, what he actually had in mind was that everyone from that time forward who manifested a spiritual kinship to Abraham, because of their faith and trust in God, would be reckoned by God to be his children. This was the honor given to Abraham because God so greatly prized and esteemed his faith and fidelity. Because Abraham humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, he highly exalted him and gave him this great name.

The real meaning behind this writing was that God intended to make Abraham the father of everyone he reckoned righteous by faith. This was exactly Jesus point to the Jews.

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

It has always been spiritual resemblance, never physical lineage. God will not use a physical tie to offer this spiritual relationship to Abraham's seed. This is what John was trying to tell them.

He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy repentance, and begin 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. 9 And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Lk. 3:7-9

Only a spiritual likeness, a likeness in heart and soul, a desire to love and serve God as Abraham did will give to any this honor. God even told the Jews that this was the real need:

Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek Jehovah: look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hold of the pit whence ye were digged. 2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him, and made him many. Isa. 51:1-2

For the remainder of the chapter Paul will speak of the quality of character and faith that Abraham had and which we are to seek to imitate. Only those with these characteristics can consider themselves true children of Abraham no matter what nation they might be living in and no matter what law they were under.

before him whom he believed, (even) God,

"katenanti... adv. prop. over against, opposite, before... metaph., with genitive of person before one i.e. he being judge... tou theou, Rom. 4:17... or he being witness [in the sight of]..." (Thayer p. 339;2713)

Abraham's faith was exercised in the presence(in the sight) of God. To understand this construction, one must go back and read the seventeenth chapter of Genesis. God was having a conversation with Abram. After 25 years at the age of 99, Abram has only Ishmael, but no son through Sarai. God then gave the promise quoted above. It is clear from the passage that Abram had become so convinced that God will fulfill his promise through Ishmael that initially he misunderstood what God was promising.

Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? 18 And Abraham said unto God, Oh that Ishmael might live before thee! 19 And God said, Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son. And thou shalt call his name Isaac. And I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. Twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. 22 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham. 23 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. 24 And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. 27 And all the men of his house, those born in the house, and those bought with money of a foreigner, were circumcised with him. Gen 17:17-27

After God fully explained exactly what he meant, Abraham believed. But only because Abram stood in the presence of God. Sarah was then 90 years old and it was no longer possible for them to have children. Yet once Abram understood that God was still promising to give him a son, none of this mattered because he was in the presence of him whom he believed, even God. There was no longer any doubt in his mind. His unwavering trust and confidence both in God's promise and in his power to accomplish whatever he desires completely removed any doubt. He was standing in the presence of one who never lies and with whom nothing is too hard. Abraham had so much faith in the presence of him whom he believed that no physical difficulties had any weight in his mind. His faith was so firm that the very day God gave him the covenant of circumcision which was his condition for continuing in covenant relationship with God he went out and circumcised himself and all his household.

who giveth life to the dead,

This is a further description of "him whom he believed, (even) God." It is a description of the comprehension Abraham had of the nature of the God he served. This is also a description of the type of faith necessary for it to be reckoned for righteousness. He is a God who "gives life" to the dead.

"zoopoieo... 1. to produce alive, beget or bear living young... 2. to cause to live, make alive, give life..."
(Thayer, p. 274; 2227)

God causes to live and gives life to those who are dead. This is the reason why Abraham, though as good as dead and even the deadness of Sarah's womb (4:19) did not waver. It also gave Abraham the confidence to offer Isaac.

By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten (son); 18 even he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 accounting that God (is) able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back. Heb 11:17-19

God can give life to that which is dead.

and calleth the things that are not, as though they were.

When God said let there be light, there was no light, but after he spoke it came into existence. So God did for each of the six days of creation, thus establishing his ability to call the things that are not as though they were and then bring them into being. He did the same thing at the flood when he told Noah there would be a flood and then made that flood. The confidence Abraham had in God the faith and trust that was reckoned as righteous was this deep and this strong. Every miracle recorded and every supernatural event that occurred is a manifestation of this ability and those who are Abraham's children will have this same characteristic. There can be no doubt about anything God says when we recognize as Abraham did just whom we are in the presence of.

While we are considering all these details, we must not lose sight that the Holy Spirit is tying

together the promise given to Abraham and the faith which brought about his righteousness. The section is written to complete the proof that God saves man by faith. Yet God's promise without an answering faith in the heart of the one to whom it is given has no value to that man. Without faith a promise may as well not be given. If Abraham had stopped believing he could not have become the father of many nations, and his faith would no longer be reckoned for righteousness.

18 Who in hope believed against hope,

Literally "*who against hope in hope believed.*" The clearer one sees the reality of the situation the more powerful what Abraham did actually becomes. Abraham and Sarai left Haran with every expectation that they would bring a new nation through which all nations of the earth could be blessed. At some point, Sarai believed that she was the reason why Abram did not have a son so she offered Hagar. It is difficult to determine from the text whether Sarai and Abram really believed that she was to be left out and the promise was to come through the handmaid Hagar. But as he watched his wife grow old, and his own life begin to fade it seems clear from the text that he had become convinced that it had to be through Hagar. It was not what he wanted, but it was what he had settled for. When God promised that it would be through Sarah, "hope" rekindled in his heart into a burning fire.

"elpis... expectation, hope; i.e expectation whether good or ill; 1. rarely in a bad sense, expectation of evil, fear;... 2. much more freq. in the classics, and always in the N. T. , in a good sense: expectation of good, hope; and in the Christian sense, joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation..."
(Thayer, p. 205-206; 1680)

He had a "*joyful and confident expectation*" in spite of the fact that there was no reason for it any longer except for God's promise. He had left Haran with a burning desire to receive God's promised blessings. Which is the first of the two essential elements for one to have hope. one must first want something very badly. Abraham loved Sarai his wife, he wanted her to be a part of this promise, he wanted to have a son with her, and he wanted to be the father through whom all nations of the earth would be blessed. Secondly, to have hope, one must have a confident expectation that it will happen. The desire was intense, but until the promise was made, there was no expectation left. Yet once God made the promise, his trust in God was so strong and firm, that he knew at that moment he would receive his dream so hope was born at the very moment where there was no hope left since there could no longer be any physical expectation. Abram hoped against hope on the basis of only one thing. He had God's promise.

to the end that he might become a father of many nations,

To the end is "*eis – which denotes the end which a thing is adapted to attain or the end which one has in view, i.e. object, purpose*" The reason why Abraham did all the above was for one specific end or purpose which he had in view from the very beginning. His desire to become a father of many nations. He wanted to be what God said he would be. He wanted to serve the purpose of God in his generation just as David had in his (Acts 13:36). It was for this that he had been faithfully serving God. He wanted to be that father and hold that position in God's plan for redeeming man. He had fulfilled all the conditions of the promise because he was excited about being such instrument for God. Now, God said it was coming, and his hope led him to believe.

It is interesting that the very faith it took to bring Isaac, is the same faith we must have in the same power. The same power that brought Isaac brings all the other children of Abraham as well.

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

according to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed be.

All of this was according to - "*kata*, which denotes reference, relation, proportion, of various sorts. Abraham's hope "*according to the measure of*" the promise God had given to him about his seed. this verse. This quotation was taken from Gen 15:5 which was spoken at least 14 years before.

After these things the word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram. I am thy shield, (and) thy exceeding great reward. 2 And Abram said, O Lord Jehovah, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and he that shall be possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? 3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed. And, lo, one born in my house in mine heir. 4 And, behold, the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, This man shall not be thine heir. But he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6 And he believed in Jehovah. And he reckoned it to him for righteousness. Gen. 15:1-6

Abraham had taken this promise to heart and had waited patiently for it to be fulfilled for many years. For years this had been on one side of the balance and his hope on the other. God now put both a time limit on the promise, and his beloved wife was to be the one through whom it came. That which Abraham had wanted so intently and waited so long to receive was now within his grasp. He was not foolish enough to allow a few physical impossibilities to get in the way of his hope. His faith in God and his mighty power were too strong for that.

19 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;

Abraham was an intelligent man, he was neither deluded nor a fool. He was not one of those ignorant superstitious people so often pictured by the enlightened. He knew exactly what the circumstances were surrounding the birth of a child to Sarah. Faith does not blind anyone. Faith is intellectual assent and trust in the power of God. For it to be genuine, it must be the exact opposite of the "blind faith" and "crutch" that the world so often accuses God's people of possessing. It must take into consideration all the variables before it can truly be faith. He knew that he was too old to father a child. He knew that Sarah's womb was dead.

It had ceased to be with her after the manner of woman, and at that point it is physical impossible to have a child.

Now Abraham and Sarah were old, (and) well stricken in age. It had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Gen. 18:11

Abraham assessed every piece of information in depth. He looked at every reason why God's promise was no longer possible, but it did not "weaken" his faith.

"astheneo... to be weak, feeble; univ. to be without strength, powerless... to be weak in faith" (Thayer, p. 80; 770)

Though he "considered"

"katanoeo...1. to perceive, remark, observe, understand... 2. to consider attentively, fix one's eyes or mind upon..." (Thayer, p. 334; 2657).

God made it very clear that Abraham was absolutely and fully aware of all the difficulties. He had assessed every one of them but still suffered no weakness, loss of strength or power to his faith. Just like we accept that God created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh in spite of all the scientific evidence to the contrary, so also here. No genuine believer is afraid to look at all the facts the world dredges up. They trust God in spite of them all. They let God be true and every man a liar.

20 yet, looking unto the promise of God,

Here was the key. Abraham kept his eyes fixed on what God promised him. God said he was going to have a son, and though he knew that physically that it was impossible because he was too old and Sarah's womb was dead, God said he would have a son. God's promise was as good to Abraham as sight is to the brain. In this respect it is no different today. We must be faithful on the same basis as he did:

while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Cor 4:18

With God's promise before his eyes, he too look at the unseen and did not allow the seen to have any affect upon him. There was no argument that could convince Abraham that he would not have a son. The son might as well have already been born and in his lap as far as Abraham was concerned. He trusted God so fully and completely that once the promise was given he knew it would be true.

he wavered not through unbelief,

He never "wavered" through "unbelief."

*"diakrino... 1. to separate, make a distinction, discriminate... like the Lat. *distinguo*, used emphatically to distinguish or separate a person or thing from the rest, in effect l. q. to prefer, yield to him the preference or honor: *tina*, I Cor 4:7..." (Thayer, p 138-139; 1252)*

"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)

Abraham kept all the facts clear in his mind through the entire time before Sarah began to show that she was with child. He never lost sight of the facts above that could have led to him wavering. He never allowed his mind to make those distinctions that lead to unbelief. He never gave his mind the right to deliberate and ponder on the things that would lead to a "want of faith and trust." There was never a day after that promise was given that Abraham wavered. He knew he was 99, he knew Sarah's womb was dead, yet he never once allowed any questions or internal debate to cloud his mind and lead to any form of deliberation that would lead him to doubt God's promise.

but waxed strong through faith,

With an "alla" the contrast between what he did not do and what he did do is strengthened. He did not waver through unbelief, but he did "wax strong" through faith.

"endunamoo... to make strong, endue with strength, strengthen... passively, to receive strength, be strengthened, increase in strength..." (Thayer, p. 214; 1743)

He "received strength" through his faith. He was "strengthened" by it. This is the exact reason why he is the father of the faithful and this is the exact characteristic that makes one of the seed of Abraham. Abraham looked at God the way everyone ought to look at him. As the creator of the heavens and the earth and the all powerful, all wise, eternal being, God can do anything and there is nothing impossible or too hard for him.

But he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. Luke 18:27

And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth. Mark 9:23

The words to Sarah who doubted when Abraham did not are the most instructive of all:

Now Abraham and Sarah were old, (and) well stricken in age. It had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12 And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? 13 And Jehovah said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, who am old? 14 Is anything too hard for Jehovah? At the set time I will return unto thee, when the season cometh round, and Sarah shall have a son. Gen 18:11-16

Abraham knew there was nothing too hard for Jehovah, he knew that all things are possible to them that believe. He simply applied what he knew to his present circumstance and therefore waxed

strong. In defense of Sarah, after this rebuke, she never wavered again.

By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted him faithful who had promised: 12 wherefore also there sprang of one, and him as good as dead, (so many) as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the sand, which is by the sea-shore, innumerable. Heb 11:11-12

This is the very essence of what faith does.

*Now faith is assurance of (things) hoped for, a conviction of things not seen - ASV
Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Heb. 11:1*

If our faith is not strong enough to follow in our father Abraham's footsteps then we are not truly the sons and daughters of Abraham. Faith gives the substance and assurance of the things we hope for. That is what it gave to Abraham and that is what it will give to us. Of equal importance faith is the evidence bringing our conviction to the things we cannot yet see. They are there, just over the horizon if God promised them, and those with true saving faith can see them and they do no waver either.

giving glory to God,

This is a fundamental thought and essential to the reason why God justifies man by this method. When one takes away perfect works as the true means to honor and give God the glory, and can no longer hold God in esteem through obedience to his laws and commandments what is left? What is the next best thing man could offer God? The only thing left is absolute faith and trust and this is exactly what Abraham offered him. Abraham showed God his great awe and reverence by placing absolute confidence in his abilities and his word. The obstacles meant nothing because Abraham was confident in the awesome abilities and power of God, and so trustworthy and reliable that not for a second did he ever doubt he would receive it. God is worthy of such trust and all who give it too him are giving him the glory.

His seed do exactly the same thing today by never wavering in their trust in Jesus power to save them, and in making all the necessary sacrifices to further his kingdom and do his will.

21 and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

It was this "full assurance" that gave God the glory.

"plerophoreo... to bear or bring full, to make full; a. to cause a thing to be shown to the full i.e. to fulfill the ministry in every respect, 2Tim. 4:5 ... b. to carry through to the end, accomplish... c. to fill one with any thought, conviction, or inclination... to make one certain, to persuade, convince one ... pass. to be persuaded... persuaded, fully convinced, or assured Rom. 4:21..." (Thayer p 517; 4135)

There simply was no room in his mind for any doubt. The promises of God so filled his mind along with the God's power to do what he promised that there was no room for anything else. Whatever God promises he will do. There will never ever be one promise God gives that will not be fully performed. When God makes a promise it will always be done. All those who are like Abraham must take every promise of God and have the same feelings toward them than Abraham did toward this one. To believe anything less than that God will keep all his promises is to dishonor him. He is all powerful, beyond even our comprehension.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21 unto him (be) the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen. Eph. 3:20-21

He cannot lie.

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

in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal; Titus 1:2

Thus the two greatest concerns and doubts that can plague the mind are done away with. God can do anything he promises to do. He will not make a promise fully intending to carry it out and then finding out in the end he does not have the power to do it. Neither will he make a promise that is not true. Abraham with a lot less revealed about God than we have knew all this and did not allow anything to hinder his convictions regarding it. No matter what is in the way of a person's conviction that God is going to fulfill his promise, a true believer will never waver in his trust of God. Instead, he will discount the impossibility of the circumstances and fully trust God.

22 Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.

"dio... wherefore, on which account..." (Thayer, Joseph Henry, op. cit. p. 152; 1352)

This act of faith so honored and glorified God, that he used it to make Abraham righteous. Because Abraham never wavered in the face of the impossibility of the situation God put it down on his account as righteousness. Abraham's faith was translated into righteousness. The caliber of faith that will not waver in great adversity and trial has always been of great price in the eyes of God. So great in value and precious in the sight of the Lord, that for this and this alone does he offer redemption and forgiveness of sin.

It is important to understand that the events Paul is speaking of here are different than the ones when the original statement was made. Abraham is 99 here, but the original statement in Genesis was made before the birth of Isaac at the age of 86. Therefore this is a second time that God reckoned Abraham faith as righteousness. It was also fulfilled again after he offered Isaac:

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. James 2:21-24

Abraham received the promise, he also became the father of all who would follow after him who had the same character. But over and above all of that shines one great beacon. Because Abraham trusted God so fully, God paid his debt for him. Because Abraham passed through this great trial with his trust in God intact, God put it down on his account as though he was a perfect man. What a blessing both to Abraham and to all his children! Those who shrink back though will find that God has no pleasure in them.

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

If thou faint in the day of adversity, Thy strength is small. Pr. 24:10

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was reckoned unto him;

The fact that this was written at all was not only for Abraham. Moses wrote the Book of Genesis many years after his death, and God did want it to benefit Abraham. He wanted him to be held in respect by his seed. He wanted them to know the greatness of what he had done so his name would be great and so that his seed would know what was expected of them.

...And make thy name great Gen 12:2

But it was not the only reason it was written. There was another reason having to do with all who would follow after:

24 but for our sake also, unto whom it shall be reckoned,

With an "alla" the Spirit represents this as a strong contrast. It was also written so that all Christians in all future generations would seek after God and attempt to give God glory in the same way Abraham did. By seeing Abraham and his great faith in adversity, it will motivate others to live as he lived. This will bring about the most desirable goal of bringing to them, the same reckoned

righteousness that Abraham received. It was written to motivate and to give hope.

who believe on him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,

What Christians are called upon to believe is no less difficult to never waver upon than what Abraham was called upon to believe. It is for this reason that God can justify us and reckon our faith as righteousness when we come to believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God. That he is Lord of all, that all power, dominion, and glory are his, that he awaits a day when he will return and pass judgment upon all and reward the faithful. All of this is signed and sealed by the resurrection. When we never waver in our faith regarding that resurrection and the things it seals as true, when we live our lives day after day seeking to serve the Lord and waiting as patiently for his return as Abraham was for his son, and when problems come along that tax our faith in the power and mercy of God as much as Abraham's faith was taxed when he was told he would have a son when there seemed no way for it to happen. Then we can be assured that we are of our father Abraham. We can rest assured that God is as pleased with us as he was with him.

25 who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification.

Paul now leaves the father of all the faithful and moves to the great truths of the gospel. He will now move to consider how Christians in their own lives work out the same glory to God that Abraham did in his. The truth of the gospel which is absolute truth teaches that Jesus death was not for anything he had done. He was delivered up for our trespasses. Every aspect of his suffering was vicarious. It was solely for us. He was beaten, condemned, and crucified for our sins. Every portion of his suffering was solely for the benefit of mankind. Jesus was a good man who suffered for evil people. Perhaps more difficult in that generation than in ours, still it is hard to believe that the son of God would be beaten and crucified. This is fundamental to one's giving God glory. It is no harder to believe than that a 99 year old man and his 90 year old wife would have a child when it was physically impossible for them to do so.

Jesus was delivered up to remove our transgressions from us. He was raised in order that we might be justified. He came up out of the grave and offered his blood to the God of heaven for our justification. Believe this with all your heart, give yourself completely to its truth, and you will be just like Abraham and thus worthy to be considered one of his offspring by God. Also worthy of our faith being reckoned to us as righteousness.