

Romans Revisited**CONTENTS**

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Disclaimer

This series sets out what the Bible and other writings teach on various topics relating to the nature of sin, race and lifestyle. They are in no way intended to incite any hatred or cause deliberate offence to any individual, group or faith that may hold alternative views.

We hold to the Christian principle that we are called to show God's love and mercy. We are to warn but not to render judgment. That is in God's hands.

Romans Revisited

FORWARD

Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to explore the whole of Paul's Epistle to the Church at Rome and understand how it relates to our faith, calling and the daily conduct of our lives. We will also look at the whole question of Israel and the Church.

This study will use a combination of New and Old Testament writings, plus other sources to help provide cultural and historical background.

We do not aim to provide all the answers, but rather to provide a framework and an encouragement to study the Scriptures further, and seek the Holy Spirit that lead us into Truth.

Our view is that an approach that tries to fill in and explain every detail is open to all sorts of errors, especially as the Bible gives us what we need to know rather than all we want to know.

We will never want you to take our word, but to be good "Bereans":

*These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. **Acts 17v11***

We also need to heed the words of Paul to Timothy:

*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. **1TIM2v15***

Basis of Belief.

We are Bible Believers, and the whole basis of this study rests on the inerrancy of the Word of God as contained in both the Old Testament and New Testament.

Whilst we need to allow for certain differences of interpretation, we believe that the original source is pure, and we do not allow for assumptions which require Scripture to be held in error.

*And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times. **Psa 12v6***

Scriptures.

Scriptures quoted are generally from the New King James version or the New International Version.

Understanding the Big Picture.

It is always important to keep the 'big picture' in mind when understanding the Bible:

God's overall purpose from Adam's fall is to restore a people to Himself. These are His own special people, serving Him from the heart.

*"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. **Deuteronomy 7 v 6***

*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 **1Peter 2v9***

This is the essence of the New Covenant:

*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 into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be their God, and they shall be My people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. **Hebrews 8v10-12** (quoting from Jeremiah 31v31-34)*

It is from this basic premise that we will be revisiting Romans.

Romans Revisited

INTRODUCTION

Romans 9v23-26

..... that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved." "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

Impact of Romans on past Church figures:

Augustine
354 - 430

Lived a licentious life, but converted to Christianity and became one of its leading theologians in the West.

At his conversion he picked up a copy of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. As he opened it, his eye fell on the end of the thirteenth chapter:

The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

As he read, he experienced this as God speaking directly to him, convicting him of his past sins, and offering him forgiveness; calling him to amend his life, and promising him the grace and power to do it. He burst into tears, and surrendered.

Martin Luther
(1483 -1546)

Re-discovered justification by faith (Note had to be re-discovered in the Church!)

His Preface starts as follows:

This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian's while not only to memorize it word for word but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes. Therefore I want to carry out my service and, with this preface, provide an introduction to the letter, insofar as God gives me the ability, so that every one can gain the fullest possible understanding of it. Up to now it has been darkened by glosses [explanatory notes and comments which accompany a text] and by many a useless comment, but it is in itself a bright light, almost bright enough to illumine the entire Scripture.

John Wesley
(1703 – 1791)

Wesley listened to a reading from Luther's preface to his commentary on Romans, at a Moravian band meeting on Aldersgate Street (May 24, 1738). As he listened to a he felt his "heart strangely warmed." And from then on nothing in Wesley was left untouched by his new found faith.

After a short journey to Germany to visit a Moravian community, he returned to England and with George Whitefield, began preaching salvation by faith. This "new doctrine" was considered redundant by the sacramentalists in the Established Church, who thought people sufficiently saved by virtue of their infant baptism. The established churches soon closed their doors to their preaching.

The Methodists began preaching in the open air And the rest as they say is history!

It is as if Romans contains a "time bomb" ready to bring revelation and restoration at needful times in Church history. It could be that one is due soon, perhaps to bring a real understanding of newness of life in Messiah and the foundations of truly understanding the purpose and Commonwealth of Israel.

Romans Revisited

ROMANS QUICK TOUR

Some of the well known verses from Romans:

1v16	For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.
3v 23	For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
5v8	But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
6v11	Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
6v23	For the wages of sin <i>is</i> death; but the gift of God <i>is</i> eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
7v24	O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?
8v1	There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,
8v26/27	For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit <i>is</i> , because He makes intercession for the saints according to <i>the will of God</i> .
8V28	And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to <i>His</i> purpose.
8V35	Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
8v37b	We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us
8V38/39	For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord
10V9/10	If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation
10V17	So then faith <i>comes</i> by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
11V29	For the gifts and the calling of God <i>are</i> irrevocable
12v2	Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what <i>is</i> that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
12v9	<i>Let love be</i> without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.
12v21	Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
14v17	for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
15v13	Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
16v20	And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.

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THE PAULINE CONTROVERSY

*Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also **our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.** You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. **2Peter 3:11-18***

*Why not (as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), "Let us do evil, that good may come?" Those who say so are justly condemned. What then? Are we better than they? No, in no way. For we previously warned both Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin. **Rom 3v 8-9.***

Paul's life and ministry was surrounded by controversy, and is in some circles even today.

We see in Acts and in some of his epistles the struggles he encountered particularly in the whole area of whether believing Gentiles should first convert to Judaism, or at least be circumcised. It seems that almost wherever he went troubles and even riots accompanied him as many Jews were stirred up to resist his preaching often in the most strident terms.

Some theologians and historians suggest that Paul caused a major rift in the church, splitting from Peter and James and ultimately being responsible for Christianity moving away from its Jewish roots. Even today he is seen by many Jewish groups as essentially a traitor, and even some Messianic Jewish believers look on him with a little suspicion.

There are some who cannot reconcile Paul's teaching on Grace and Law to the extent that they have taken the extreme position of rejecting the writings of Paul altogether. These "Anti-Paulinians" conclude that Paul wasn't a true apostle of the Messiah Yeshua. Therefore, they believe his epistles should not be considered Scripture and his teachings should be discarded!

The fact is that we owe much of our freedom in Christ to his perseverance and teaching, even his standing up to Peter and others regarding Jewish attitudes to Gentiles. However when we read and really understand Paul he always upheld the Torah and taught to live by its principles, and never talked of abandoning it.

*Was anyone called having been circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. **Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.** Let each man stay in that calling in which he was called. **1COR 7v18-20***

Post Messianic viewpoint.

Although Paul was an accomplished Pharisee who excelled at one of the prime schools of the day, we never see him (as would be custom) quoting "in the name of" the great teachers. Paul's appeal now is always directly to Scripture.

However it does not mean that he had necessarily abandoned the great truths in Jewish teaching, but that as far as he and the other Apostles were concerned it was now in a post-Messianic age where Jesus had already come and fulfilled or given full meaning to the Law.

As he himself says in Romans, the way of faith establishes the Law and does not pull it down.

The coming of Messiah, the application of His Atoning Sacrifice and the work of Grace by the Holy Spirit has not changed the Law, but it has changed our approach to it in the New Covenant.

All of Paul's stances and teaching were in the light of the fact that the Messiah had already come. And now it was a question of how the Messiah's role was to be applied to biblical prophecy and Jewish thought.

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Paul, Peter and James.

As stated earlier some people have emphasised the contention that existed between Paul and Peter and James. However, although we see some differences between them, and even an argument regarding Gentiles (Gal 1v11-16), in their epistles they are essentially in agreement. This is particularly so regarding Faith and Works, which will be seen later in this series.

They certainly agree at the Council in Jerusalem and Paul is given support from them, and also, according to Paul, they had also defined their responsibilities:

And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go to the heathen, and they to the circumcision. (Gal 2v 9)

So it this certainly explains why their own ministries and writing were focussed the way they were. More importantly there appears to be an agreed strategy regarding outreach and ministry to the Jews and Gentiles.

Even with this we should take note of what seems to be one of Paul's key points: "To the Jew first and also the Gentile". Wherever Paul went he showed a preference to go first to the Jews, giving them opportunity, and then he went to the Gentiles. This holds true even when he did eventually get to Rome (Acts 28v16-29).

Can a Gentile Be Saved ?

The white heat from which we see so much of Paul's struggles and writings was the raging debate that was going on in the first century regarding the place of the Gentiles in the world to come. Even in the Jewish world there was a fierce division about whether Gentiles could even be saved, and this eventually spilled over into the church:

And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.

But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses."

Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter, and when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me:

"Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name, and with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up, so that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things. Known to God from eternity are all His works.'

"Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." (Acts 15 v 1-21)

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Heresy

There are a number of heresies that people claim have some of their roots in Paul's teaching. If so this has come out of a deliberate or otherwise misunderstanding of his teachings and what Paul was about in terms of the man and his ministry.

This echoes the warning given by Peter at the beginning of this section:

*.....which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction,
as they do also the rest of the Scriptures*

Such heresies include:

Antinomianism	The theological doctrine that by faith and God's grace a Christian is freed from all laws, including the Torah, and all moral standards. In extreme terms it would allow complete sexual licence. It is the complete opposite of legalism, but both are out of balance. It also tends to deny, implicitly or explicitly, the authority of the Old Testament. An early Gnostic, Marcion, went so far as to completely reject the Old Testament. He stated that since Jewish law was often opposed to St. Paul, all passages in the Bible that suggested the Jewish foundation of Christianity should be suppressed!
Predestination	Taking the election of God to extremes this doctrine leaves less and less to choice and free-will and becomes a fatalistic religion, losing the emphasis on obedience to God and service to others. Many groups who follow this tend to also be exclusive.
Replacement Theology	The doctrine that the church has completely replaced Israel in the plan and purpose of God. All biblical prophecy relating to Israel is transferred and 'symbolised' to apply to the church, although strangely none of the punishments for disobedience.
"Grace only"	Similar to Antinomianism in that salvation is by Grace alone, and that thus good works and obedience are pointless.
Stoicism	A popular Greek philosophy around at the time of Paul, but also carried forward into Christian teaching. This is effectively achieving holiness or spirituality by denying of all pleasure, and living a life of self-denial, self-punishment and often reclusive.

All heresies contain a kernel of truth, but which is taken to extreme and does not allow for the whole counsel of Scripture. This would certainly not have been the case with Paul, who always encouraged a full study of the Word:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. 1TIM2v15

Most of these heresies have been dealt with at some time in Church history. For example Antinomianism was countered within the first century. However we find that strains each of these this exist in some form today and are often implicit or "built in" to our church thinking.

For example we would not necessarily see Antinomianism paraded as a doctrine today in churches, but what we see are churches that do not seem to have much time for the Old Testament, and some even say that it has largely been replaced by New Testament teaching.

We also see a growing emphasis on being "world friendly" and focus on enjoyment rather than the Joy of the Lord.

Others such as Replacement Theology are still very much active in many churches and denominations today.

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Jewish Roots

Quite rightly we hear a lot about the need to return to our Jewish roots, but this must never be confused with a return to Judaism. This is the very battle that Paul was involved with and that the Council of Jerusalem aimed to resolve as far as the Gentiles are concerned.

Paul was taking the Gentiles away from the legalism of Judaism, and bringing us to the true root which is the faith (obedience) of Abraham and the covenant(s) of promise!

But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. Romans 9v6-8

Also our root is in Yeshua and the life that comes from Him.

The importance for us all is to divest ourselves of the Gentile traditions and teaching that have covered over a true understanding of the core biblical Christianity based upon:

- The character of God, and especially the God of Covenant
- Hebraic principles and teaching
- Knowing the true nature and teaching of Messiah,
- The New Covenant
- Prophecy and the Heart of God concerning the Commonwealth of Israel.

This is like restoring an original painting that over the years has been touched up, distorting the original image, allowed to fade and also covered with the dust and grime that has been accumulated through misuse and lack of cleaning.

Perhaps this is part of a "time bomb" that Romans can yet be used to explode as a revelation to the church in this day.

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PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

To help unravel Romans we need to have an insight on the man who (under the anointing of the Spirit) wrote the epistle, to look at the backdrop of his life, character, training and mission.

The *Acts of Paul and Thekla*, an apocryphal source from the second century is the only document in which we have an account which describes the outward appearance of the Apostle Paul:

Onesiphorus hears that Paul is coming along the road from Lystra to Iconium, and goes to meet him. His description upon seeing Paul for the first time was:

"a man small of stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of grace; for now he appeared like a man, and now he had the face of an angel."

Saul of Tarsus

We all tend to be affected by where we come from and spent our formative years.

During the reign of Pompey (67 B.C.), Tarsus was made capital over the Roman province of Cilicia, and Jews began to receive Roman citizenship. Antony, who controlled the eastern provinces, declared the city free in 42 B.C. Tarsus continued to receive special privileges under Augustus, who exempted the city from imperial taxation because Athenodorus, his teacher and friend, was from Tarsus.

Tarsus grew into a cultural and intellectual centre. Great stoic philosophers like Athenodorus, Zeno, Antipater, and Nestor lived in the city in the first century A.D.

Training under Gamaliel

Rabban Gamaliel ha-zaken was president of the Great Council and Israel's spiritual leader during the last decades before the destruction of the Temple. The additional name "ha-zaken" or "the old one", he was given to distinguish him from his grandson Rabban Gamaliel de-Yavneh, who lived and worked in Jamnia. (In rabbinic literature there are as many as six scholars named Gamaliel).

Gamaliel was the first of the presidents of the Great Council to be called "rabban" or "our rabbi".

The Jews also mention in their own sources that "old" Gamaliel was the teacher of Saul of Tarsus.

Acts 5: 34-40 tells of Gamaliel the teacher of the Law "who was honoured by all the people." When the Great Council were deliberating on what to do with the first apostles, who had "filled Jerusalem with their teaching," Gamaliel, who was known for his moderation, stood up and gave wise advice:

"Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men ... Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

Gamaliel was known for his humane and rational decisions. Jewish writings have recorded one of his statements that resembles his words in Acts:

"Every party which is founded in God's name will in the end endure; but one which is not built in God's name will not endure in the end." (Pirquei Abot 5:17)

Other writings state that one should "seek the truth out of pure motives" and not act "out of envy or obstinately."

Gamaliel's aim was to solve contemporary problems "to correct the world," which meant that "the interpretation of the Law was applied according to the needs of renewing life." Pharisaism was also a kind of reform movement. This basic aim Gamaliel received from his famous grandfather Rabbi Hillel.

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During Gamaliel's presidential term in the Great Council was also drawn up the following well-known "halakhah" or application of the Law:

"In a city where both Jews and Gentiles live, a Jew should besides looking after the poor also appoint a superintendent to look after Gentiles and to receive contributions for the poor from the Gentiles, if they want to give any; similarly, one should look after both Gentile and Jewish poor people; visit sick Gentiles, bury their dead and hold funeral speeches for them, console their mourners and clothe their destitute, in order to maintain the peace."

Against this background we can understand the Apostle Paul's attitude to the Gentiles and his great zeal for, for example, contributing to the needs of the "saints in Jerusalem".

However there seems to be a real irony here in that by his own admission Paul was a strict Pharisee whereas Gamaliel taught a much more heart based and tolerant version. Apparently the Hellenistic Jews were known for being far stricter in Judaism than even their Jerusalem counterparts, which also explains why he seemed to have far more trouble from his own countrymen in the regions,

This must have been a rather interesting dynamic, and there is an account of Gamaliel having trouble with a stubborn student at this time. Could it have been Paul? We do not know but it certainly seems very possible.

We know that many priests (Acts 6v7) and also Pharisees (Acts 15v5) converted to 'The Way' and it is quite probable that a number would have come from the school of Gamaliel. Although this is of course conjecture it would seem perfectly logical. Maybe Paul was already aware of some of his colleagues who had converted, and this was part of him 'kicking against the goads'.

Damascus Road

As a strict Pharisee, Paul was at first a zealous persecutor of the believers but after his dramatic Damascus Road conversion became the Apostle of the Gentiles, and the greatest proponent of the Gospel.

Paul would not just spread the Gospel, but also usher in a fuller understanding of Gentile and Jew in Messiah, and especially justification and righteousness through faith.

The term has fallen into common language as people talk about a "Damascus Road" experience that completely turns their life around. Nothing can be more true of Paul himself, yet in his heart something must have been burning in him, for in Paul's own words he had been chosen by the Lord from the womb. The words that Jesus spoke to Paul on the Damascus Road are very interesting:

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." Acts 9V5

There is a lot of material here for not only sermons but for psychologists, but whatever the view about this Paul certainly turned from being a man driven by hatred (maybe jealousy), and religious zeal to one motivated by mission, compassion and love.

Although John is considered the Apostle of God's Love, yet it is Paul who would pen those great words on Love that is one of the most noted both in and out of Christian circles. It was even recognised by David Ben Gurion as one of the greatest writings in Jewish literature!

In his own testimony Paul declares:

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen. . 1TIM 1 v 12-16

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Paul's Qualifications

Paul recognised that he had been selected for his mission, even from birth, and we can see that his upbringing made him a perfect man for the job. Even those things that initially seemed to be against the Gospel were turned round to the good:

- ⇒ A "Hebrew of Hebrews" (both parents Hebrews?) **Ph 3:3-4; - 2 Co 11:22**
- ⇒ Of the tribe of Benjamin **Rom 11v1**
- ⇒ A Pharisee who studies at the feet of Gamaliel (the elder) **Ac 22:3; cf. 5:34-40**
- ⇒ A strict Pharisee - **Ac 23:6; 26:4-5; Ph 3:5**
- ⇒ Excelled above his contemporaries in Judaism - **Ga 1:13-14**
- ⇒ A man of zeal, passion and perseverance **1 Cor 15 v 9-10, Phil 3**
- ⇒ A Roman Citizen (free-born) **Ac 22:25-29**
- ⇒ Brought up in Tarsus (Asia Minor) among Jews and Gentiles. **Acts 21:39; 22:3; 23:34**
Tarsus was the capital ("no mean city"), known for its school of literature and philosophy, said to exceed even those of Athens and Alexandria.
- ⇒ A mobile profession as a tent-maker **Ac 18:1-3**
- ⇒ A man of integrity - **2 Ti 1:3; Ac 23:1**
- ⇒ A teacher **Acts 11v25-26; Acts 19v8-10; Acts 20v20**
- ⇒ A man of prayer **Rom 1v9; Eph 1v16; 2Tim 1v3; Phm 1v3; 1Thess 5v17**

If Peter was the instrument to unlock the door of the Gospel to the Gentiles, Paul was the one who would kick it wide open!

Paul was a man consumed with his mission ("*woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel*" **1Cor 9v16**)

In him were truly fulfilled the words of Jesus announced to Ananias in Damascus concerning Paul's future:

"Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

And in Paul's own words:

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.

Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.

*I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. **2COR 11 23-27***

Another essential aspect of Paul was his humility and lack of personal charisma, as expressed in his own words:

*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. **1COR2 v 1-3***

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

*Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **2COR 12v 7-9***

*"For his letters," they say, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." **2COR10v10***

Romans Revisited

A Man of Faith and Power.

Paul had a miracle and healing ministry that would more than rival any evangelist or faith ministry today, and it is clear that he intended that people's faith did not rest in the intellect of man, but the power and reality of the Holy Spirit:

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 1COR 2v4-5

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. Acts 19v11-12

Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? Gal 3v5

Paul was not interested in theological doctrines, but the practical application and outworking of the Gospel the Spirit and the Word of God.

People often have problems with Romans and Paul's other epistles because they don't want to read what it says!

That I might know Him.

Paul shares his own position, motivation and hope in Philipians:

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:

*Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin,
A Hebrew of Hebrews;
In regard to the law, a Pharisee;
As for zeal, persecuting the church;
As for legalistic righteousness, faultless.*

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ— the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Romans Revisited

Summary of Paul's life and Ministry

This table is a brief overview of the main events in Paul's life.
The dates are approximate and if followed by a question mark are conjectural.

Date (AD)		References
5 ?	Born a Roman citizen of Jewish Parents in Tarsus of Cilicia (in modern Turkey).	Acts 22 v 25-29
5 – 26 ?	Brought up in Cilicia (in modern Turkey)	Acts 21 v39 22v3, 23v34
26 ?	Came to Jerusalem to study "at the feet of Gamaliel"	Acts 22v3
32	Present, and maybe active witness, at the stoning of Stephen	Acts 7 v 58-60 Acts 22v20
32-34	Main agent on the persecution of the Church	Acts 8 v 1-4
34	Encounter and conversion on the road to Damascus	Acts 9 v 1-18
34-36	Three 'quiet' years in Arabia (or the wilderness) Return to Damascus. Preaching & Escape to Jerusalem	Gal 1 v 15-17 Acts 9 v 22-26
36	First visit to Jerusalem	Acts 9 v 27 - 29
40 ?	Caught up into the Heavens	2 Cor 12 v 1-4
39-43	Return to Tarsus	Acts 9 v 30
44	Paul and Barnabus at Antioch	Acts 11v 20-26
45	Second visit to Jerusalem (famine relief)	Acts 11v 30 & 12v25
45 – 49	First Missionary Journey and stay in Antioch	Acts 13 & 14
50	Council at Jerusalem	Acts 15 v 1-10
	Paul rebukes Peter at Antioch	Gal 1v11-14
51-54	Second Missionary Journey	Acts 15v36 – 18v22
54-58	Third Missionary Journey	Acts 18v23 – 19v19
58	Epistle to the Romans written from Corinth	
58	In Jerusalem	Acts 21v15 – 23v22
58-60	Imprisonment in Caesarea	Acts 23v23 – 26v32
60-61	Journey to Rome	Acts
61-63	First visit to Rome (as prisoner)	Acts 28 v 16-31
63-67	Further travels not recorded in Acts	
67 ?	Return to Rome, captivity	
67/68 ?	Beheaded on the orders of Nero	

Impact of Paul

- Most of the Book of Acts relate to the life and missions of Paul
- 2/3rds. Of the Epistles are written by him.
- Founded key churches
- Revelation and teaching that impact the church to this day

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (ICOR 15v9-10)

Romans Revisited

ROMANS A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The book of Romans seems to have been written from Corinth.

- Paul commends Phoebe to the church at Rome, saying that she had been "a servant to the church which is at Cenchrea" (Romans 16:1). Cenchrea is the eastern Port of Corinth.
- He says in Romans 16:23 that "Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you." Gaius is seen in 1 Corinthians 1:14 to have been a member of the church at Corinth.

Paul was at Corinth on two different occasions. His initial trip to Corinth was on his Second Missionary Journey. He later returned to Corinth on his Third Missionary Journey.

As far as we know Paul had not visited Rome at this point; but after fulfilling his mission of mercy to Jerusalem, he was hoping to visit Rome en route to Spain.

He explains that he had wanted to come to Rome for several years but had not done so because his mission had been to go where Christ had not been preached (ROM 15v20-22).

However, he had now already preached the gospel "from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum and felt that he had completed his aim ^(ROM 15v19/23)

We know from 2 Corinthians 9 that this gift for Jerusalem was collected well after his first visit to Corinth, and so this places the composition of Romans as taking place about 58/60 A.D.

It is clear from the context that Paul writes to the Roman Church as primarily a Gentile Church, with probably a number of Jewish believers among them (Rom 1:13&15 Rom 15:15-16).

Some scholars believe that the church at Rome may have been established on the return of believing Jews and Gentiles from Pentecost, or very soon afterward.

However and whenever it occurred, the church at Rome seems to have been well established and mature by the time Paul was on his missionary journeys to the Gentiles and writing this epistle.

Paul's discourse also seems to presuppose a working knowledge on the part of his readers with the leading principles of the Old Testament (Rom 7v1), which could be explained by supposing that the at least some of them may have been Gentile proselytes to the Jewish faith.

The epistle is one of two in the New Testament Epistles that Paul wrote without have having first visited or founded the church. The other is Colossians.

OCCASION FOR WRITING.

1. To commend Phoebe to the church at Rome (Romans 16:1).
2. To prepare the way for Paul's eventual coming to Rome and to explain why he is not coming at this time.
3. To set forth a detailed study of the righteousness of God as it relates to the world, to the church, to justification and sanctification, and to the nation of Israel.

The chronological order of the Pauline epistles is about as follows:

First and Second Thessalonians, Galatians, First and Second Corinthians, **Romans (58AD)**, Colossians, Ephesians, Philipians, Philemon, First Timothy, Titus, and Second Timothy.

It is thought that Romans was placed first in The Epistles not only because it is the longest, but because it also furnishes a basic foundation of faith for the whole collection of the writings.

Romans Revisited

UNLOCKING ROMANS

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

The key to unlock Romans is given in Paul' opening and closing statements:

*through whom we received grace and apostleship, **for obedience of faith among all the nations**, for his name's sake; Rom 1:5*

*For I am not ashamed of the Good News of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes; for the Jew first, and also for the Greek. **For in it is revealed God's righteousness from faith to faith**. As it is written, "But the righteous shall live by faith." Rom 1:16/17:*

*Now to him who is able to establish you according to my Good News and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret through long ages, but now is revealed, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known **for obedience of faith to all the nations**; Rom 16:25/26*

Romans is essentially a book of Faith, but the Faith that produces fruit, and the fruit of obedience in particular. In this respect it is in full keeping with epistles such as Peter and James, since faith and obedience is measured by action. This is the correct practical Hebrew approach rather than a theoretical approach of Greek thought.

As Apostle to the Gentiles he is also asserting that this faith has now come to all nations:

The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith Gal 3v8-9

is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Romans 3 v 29-30

..... that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved." "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God." Romans 9v23 -26

PAUL'S ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

- A true Jew and Pharisee
- Fully upheld the Word (what we call the Old Testament)
- Expected true Godly conduct
- Believed in order and authority
- Dynamic Practical ministry rather than conceptual theology
- Apostle to the Gentiles

TIME AND SEASON.

- Growing Gentile church
- Issue of Gentile requirements for salvation
- Increasing problems with false teaching
- Addressing Jewish arrogance and Gentile behaviour

Romans Revisited

WHO IS A JEW?

ROMANS 1-3 & ROM 9

If we ask the question today “Who is a Jew” we will get many answers depending upon who we ask.

For example an Orthodox Jew would say that a Jew must either be born of a Jewish mother, or be a full convert as recognized by the correct Rabbinical Court. To them a Jew who is born a Jew is always a Jew even if they abandon Judaism.

In Romans Paul lifts this to a higher distinction based on faith and a new heart.

He does not diminish the importance of being a Jew “after the flesh” but now that Messiah has come and ushered in the New Covenant we also need to look at things from a different perspective.

Firstly we start with his introduction, and how he builds his case.

Greetings to the Called. (Rom 1 v 1 – 17)

Paul makes a declaration concerning both the Jewish pedigree and divinity of Jesus.

Paul’s call to bring the Gentiles into faith

The called of Jesus:

Called as saints. This compares to statements in Peter:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: who in time past were no people, but now are God's people, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. 1Peter 2v9-10

And also in Revelation:

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth." Rev 5v9-10.

In fact the word Church or “Ecclesia” means a company of chosen or “called out ones”.

The same term is used in the account of Stephen when talks of the Ecclesia in the Wilderness, referring to the congregation of Israel under Moses. It is even more interesting to note that even then the assembly included non-Jews in its midst:

All Israel, aliens and citizens alike, with their elders, officials and judges, were standing on both sides of the ark of the covenant of the LORD, facing those who carried it— the priests, who were Levites Joshua 8v33

These may have formed part of the accepted “God Fearing Gentiles or even proselytes of the day that sought to leave Egypt and join the people of God. This may sound somewhat familiar!

The Gospel.

Paul is stating that he is not ashamed of the Gospel; it is the power of God to those that **believe to the Jew first and also the Gentile.**

In another place Paul says:

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1COR 1v18)

As stated previously Paul went to the Jew first and then the Gentile. But whether Jew or Gentile to those that believed “the just shall live by faith”.

Romans Revisited

God's Position on Unrighteousness (Rom 1v18 – 32)

Paul unequivocally states that the wrath of God towards sin and lawlessness has not changed.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men

We then have an account of the downward spiral of sin and arrogance against God, and a list of sinful behavior. The interesting and somewhat fearful thing is the nature of God's judgement:

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind; to do what ought not to be done. (Romans 1v28)

We have heard of the principle of sowing and reaping, but this is also fearful when we read how God gives the wicked over to the sin they crave for!

There are also echoes of this in Revelation:

Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. (REV 22v11-15)

We should be so thankful to be able to cry Abba, and have our God as Father who is caring and looking out for us. To have the atonement in Yeshua and not be left as 'illegitimate'.

ROM 1v20

God is evident in His Creation, so man is without excuse.

Compare this with Psalm 19:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat.

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.

The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Romans Revisited

Chapter 2:

DOERS NOT HEARERS

Paul makes it quite clear that people, (such as the Jews?) who sit in judgement on others but are also sinners will not escape His judgment.

The Lord will judge or justify both those in the Law and those outside the Law:

But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who "will render to each one according to his deeds": eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness - indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;

But glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.

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 (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; (Romans 2v 5-13)

As Paul states the real issue is the heart: is it self seeking and rebellious or does it seek after truth and righteousness. At the very end God is not showing any special favour, his mercy or judgement is for both Jew and Gentile.

It is the doers, or those who truly obey that are justified.

We hear this same sentiment in James:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it— he will be blessed in what he does. (James 1v22-25)

We should also take note of the words of Jesus:

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (Matt 7 v 21-23)

It is also important to note in this same context the Parables of Jesus such as

- The houses built on sand and rock (Matt 7 v 26-29)
- The Sower and the seed (Matt 13v3-23)
- Two Sons asked to work (Matt 21 v 28-32)

Sh'ma Israel

Hear (Sh'ma), O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (Deut 6v4-5)

The Sh'ma implies obey

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 1John2v3-6

Romans Revisited

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION

For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?

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?

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God. (ROM 2v25-29)

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, Col 2v11

Paul's teaching here is not as radical as it may at first appear, since at least the concept of this appears in Jewish writings beforehand:

"that whosoever denies idolatry, "is called a Jew":" (Babylonian Talmud)

According to these writings the term "Jew" need not be confined to pure ancestry, but belongs to all such who truly fear and worship God. These writings also relate that Pharaoh's daughter was called, "a Jewess", because she denied idolatry and washed herself from the idols of her father's house. It was also written elsewhere that:

"faith does not depend upon circumcision, but upon the heart: he that believes not as he should, circumcision does not make him a Jew; and he that believes as he ought, he indeed is a Jew, though he is not circumcised."

Philo, a Jewish writer who was a contemporary of Paul wrote about circumcision as being:

A symbol of two things particularly; the one is the cutting off of pleasures, and the other is the removal of arrogance, that grievous disease of the soul. Philo also wrote that purity, or chastity is the 'circumcision of circumcision'.

Most importantly this is of course something very much established in the Old Testament, and is in many ways the essence of the New Covenant, where His Torah is in our hearts, and it is from the heart that His chosen walk with Him.

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! DEUT 5v29

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. Deut 6v5-6

And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it.

Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked, for the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. Deut 10 v12-17

"And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. DEUT 30v6

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6v8

Praise from God

When Paul says "whose praise is not from men but from God" it could be a play on Judah (Praise) from which Jew is derived. In any event he is making the statement that this circumcision has to come from the Lord, by the Spirit. This is echoed also in the Gospel of John:

...as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1v12-13.

Romans Revisited

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Psalm 51v10

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it come the issues of life. Prov 4v23

We know that the Lord does not look upon the outward appearance, but on the heart. This is part of the problem with legalism, in that we can be seen to be doing all the right things, but full of corruption inside, as in the harsh words of Jesus to the some of the Pharisees.

In terms of true repentance we hear *Rend your heart and not your garments (Joel 2v13)*

The teachings of Jesus place emphasis on what is happening in the heart, especially in relation to the Law and outward appearance.

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man. Matt 15 v 18-20

So at the end of the day the real issues come to what is in the heart of man ... again the New Covenant!

Jesus said that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees. This is because it comes from a renewed heart and a different attitude. To walk in God's love is to fulfill the Law.

ALL HAVE SINNED SO THAT ALL CAN BE MADE RIGHTEOUS

Chapter 3

Paul starts with a balancing statement to say that there is indeed an advantage in being a Jew, mainly because through them the revelation of God has come. There is still something special about His people, and when that veil is taken away a real light often shines.

Paul now develops his argument to cover how all (i.e. both Jew and Gentile) have sinned, whether in the Law or outside the Law, whether circumcised or uncircumcised.

For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God, they have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."

.... 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. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Romans 3 v 9-12 & 19 - 26

Paul completes this part by stating that there can be no boasting in works of the law, because it is by faith (in Jesus) that we are justified. Our God is God over all, both Jews and Gentiles.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. (ROM 3v 28-30)

To counter any imbalance or accusation about the law he finishes here by saying that this does not destroy the law, but actually establishes it. This is developed more a little later, but again in some ways relates to the New Covenant. See also Galatians 3v21-26.

Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Romans Revisited

ABRAHAM THE FATHER OF MANY NATIONS

Romans Chapter 4

Paul now develops his case concerning justification by faith for both Jews and Gentiles by pointing to Abraham. He makes the following key points:

1. Abraham was justified by faith and not works.
2. Abraham was counted as righteous before he was circumcised
3. Circumcision was a seal of the righteousness he had before being circumcised
4. He is the father of all who believe both circumcised and uncircumcised
5. It is not the law, but being heirs of the promise that counts
6. Abraham's crediting as righteous was written for all believers in Jesus:
The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness— for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. (Rom 4v23-25)

It has also been said that the Children of Israel were saved from Egypt before they received the Torah, and so it was not given to save them from Egypt, but given to a people already saved!

Similarly we are saved through the Passover of Jesus, and not by works, yet we have a life to live in Him that should bring the fruit of the Spirit and good works.

If we compare Paul's statement with James it could at first seem that there is some disagreement:

And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. James 2v23-24.

However if you carefully study the context, James was countering the 'conceptual faith' or that faith that is merely mental assent. As a true Jew James was making a statement that faith produces results, that is Abraham did not just listen and say Amen he obeyed and took action. This is also what Paul was saying as Abraham 'did not waver through unbelief'.

Jesus also said the same thing, when he said that "if you love me keep my commandments (John 15v15) and also "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" Matt 7v21.

A Man after God's own Heart

In Genesis we have an account when the Lord shared to Abraham what was about to happen to Sodom and Gomorrah. The reason given shows that God had chosen a man after His heart:

Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"

For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." Gen 18v16-19

King David has a similar testimony:

He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Acts 13v22

Although both of these men clearly made mistakes and did wrong, yet there was something about the heart and character that sought after Him. This is part of the election and calling, not of those who would keep laws and statutes and yet follow after their own heart, but those who would "seek the kingdom of God and His Righteousness"

Romans Revisited

THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

Paul progresses this argument a little later in Romans to drive the point home that it is being of the "seed of Abraham" that really counts. It is not being Jew or Gentile but being children of **the** faith (note not just any faith) and of the promises.

But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. (Rom 9v 6-8)

This is the part of the wonderful mystery of the Church. The Lord had always had a plan right from the beginning that would include salvation to all that would come to Him. But it was first through a man, then a nation and then brought back together by a man: Jesus!

Romans 9v25-33

As He says also in Hosea [1&2]: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God."

Isaiah [10v22] also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth." And as Isaiah [1v9] said before: "Unless the LORD of Hosts had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah."

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone, as it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." [Isa 8v14; 28v16 and also Psa 118v22]

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: who in time past were no people, but now are God's people, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1PET 2v9)

For you are all children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise. (GAL 3v21-29)

A NEW CREATION

It is the new life that counts ... but that new life has to be real and produce fruit.

For he [Jesus] himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household. Eph 2 v 14-15 & 19

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision has any strength, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them and upon **the Israel of God.**" (GAL 6.15-16)*

... put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. COL 3 v 10-11

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2COR 5v17

Romans Revisited

REIGNING IN LIFE

Session 2 Reigning in Life (Romans 5 – 8)

For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ ROM 5v17

Chapter 5

Reconciliation

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rom 5 v1-5.

This peace is to do with our reconciliation with God. We are no longer enemies, against God's law but have been reconciled to Him through Jesus, and His blessing of peace and harmony is upon us.

The Love of God (*Agape Theos*) is poured in our hearts by the Holy Spirit so much that we can glory in Him. The Greek for poured implies that this is done in abundance!

Is this Love of God meaning His love in us ... or has He put in us a real love for Him?

Essentially both, but the point to note is that it is the work of Grace that turns us to Him and the Spirit in us yearns to become like Him:

And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 1John 3:3

Our salvation is much more than a one-time event, but one that is ongoing and growing in us through His life that He has put within us:

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. ROM 5v11

This is also expressed by Peter:

To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacks these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2Peter 1v2-11

Adam and Jesus (Rom 5 v 12-19)

Paul points out that sin and death came through one man (Adam), and so by one man (Jesus) comes Righteousness and Life. Paul also has a similar theme in his letter to the Corinthians:

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 1COR15v19-23

We are now called to reign in Life through Jesus! (ROM 5v17).

Romans Revisited

LAW SIN AND GRACE.

Grace Abounds !

For all who rely on works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." Now it is evident that no one is justified] before God by the Law, for "The righteous shall live by faith." But the Law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" Gal 3 v 10-13

Grace is NOT Licence !

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Rom 5 v 20-21

For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins Hebrews 10v26

Paul repeats again (and again) that true Grace leads to living the new life unto God. It is not a licence to sin and go do your own thing. To Paul being dead to sin was not just a theological concept but a practical necessity. Strangely we talk about being dead to sin as a way of life!

Peter also speaks in a more forceful way concerning those who disobey and pervert the gospel:

.... For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud." 2PET 2v 18-22

Also in the words of John:

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth, but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 1John1v5-2v6

James is also quite clear that we cannot have it both ways:

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4v4-8

... now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. 1TIM1v5-17

Romans Revisited

The Practical Reality.

It is evident from the various writings that there were problems in the early church regarding the behaviour and even the false teaching of some. It is equally evident that such was not acceptable and steps taken to deal with it.

This is not about those who make mistakes (as we all do and shall see this in Chapter 7) and can be restored and then move on:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1v9

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5 v16

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. GAL 6v1-2

However the practical reality is that we there is a distinction to be drawn between those who follow after the Lord and those who, no matter what their profession may be, do not.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: Matt 7v21-24

For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush.

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like:

He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."
Luke 6 v 43- 47

The main issue is not what we achieve in His name (though that is important) but our character and obedience. It is clearly possible to do mighty things in the name of Jesus, and yet our nature and character still not reflect the "good seed" or the New Life.

In the parable of the wheat and the tares Jesus warned that in there will be a mixture of people until the end of the age:

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.

The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear".MATT 13v37-43

It seems very implicit that the "sons of the kingdom" should be expressing the righteousness of that kingdom.

Romans Revisited

There are also many warnings from Paul, Peter and others how this mixture will also come into the Church. For example:

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. 2 Peter 2v1-2

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. 5 But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. Jude 2-5

NB: Take time to read the whole chapters of Peter and Jude.

Jesus and the Church

Jesus did not say very much directly about running the Church, but He did make one very interesting point:

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. MATT 18 v 15-18

A similar approach is also followed by Paul in a particularly difficult case (Corinthians)

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person." 1COR 5 v 1-13

Romans Revisited

Evil heart of unbelief

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honour than the house.

For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?

And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

Hebrews 3v1 Ch4v2

In Hebrews we are also encouraged to pursue a godly life, and never sell our birthright (which is the New Covenant Life given to) for the short term rewards of this world

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord, looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. Hebrews 12v14-17

Crucified with Christ

We return to one of our basic themes.

If we died to sin and to the law we cannot continue to live the same way.

Once again the statements of Rabbi Shaul are intended as a practical outworking of faith, and not fodder for a theological dissertation:

We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.

For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

GAL 2v15-20

Romans Revisited

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

Paul moves on to show how baptism and our new life work together. It is our view that baptism is a key part and a boundary stone in the believer's life, but its true significance like our entire walk has to be entered into by faith and not just ritual.

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, 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." Matt 28v19-20

Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Acts 2:38

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

*Therefore we were **buried with Him through baptism into death**, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, **even so we also should walk in newness of life**. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.*

*Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, **reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord**. ROM 5v 3-11*

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

*There is also an antitype [pattern] which now saves us, baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that **he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God**. 1PET3v18 -4v2*

The king is dead. Long live the king.

This is the phrase that is uttered when a monarch dies. The nation acknowledges that the previous ruler is now dead and gone, and then pronounces a blessing on the new ruler. So it is with us. We must continually recognise that the old ruler (the flesh) is dead and acknowledge and bless the new ruler in us, which is the New Life in Jesus. It is death to sin and being alive to God.

Mikveh and Baptism.

Ritual cleansing by immersion was and still is very important to the Jewish faithful. Testimony to this is found in the number of first century Mikvehs that have been uncovered in Israel. We know too that washing was an important part of the Levitical priestly service.

Although baptism appears similar it is in fact something completely different. As Peter was pointing out above, it is not to do with being ritually clean, but about actual death to self and living the new life that we have in Christ. However we do have "Mikvehs" that we should undergo:

Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. Eph 5v25-27

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God 2COR 7v1

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1John v7-10

Romans Revisited

We also see another pattern of baptism in the crossing of the Red Sea:

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ, but with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. 1COR 10v1-6.

The Congregation of Israel went through the waters (though they did not get wet!). They passed from slavery in Egypt into a new free people. They could not return to the old ... even though they tried and hankered after it.

We too are dead to this world and called to a new life, though if we are not careful we also find ourselves complaining and hankering after things we should not and find idolatry at work. Certainly the Lord gives us "richly all things to enjoy" but this should be very much secondary to the life that we have and live in Him.

In his letter to the Colossians Paul brings baptism and circumcision together:

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. COL 2v11-15

The baptism of John and Jesus

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples, he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Acts 19v1-6

Different baptisms:

Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. Heb 6v2

Water Baptism	Public act of acknowledging death to the old self and resurrection life in Jesus to live in the newness of life.
Baptism in the Holy Spirit	Immersion in the Holy Spirit to receive the manifestations of the Spirit.
Baptised into one Body	<i>For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 1Co 12:13</i> <i>One Lord, one faith, one baptism, Eph 4:5</i>
Baptised into Christ	<i>Gal 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ</i>

Romans Revisited

Whom do you Obey?

Having reached the point where we understand that sin no longer has the rule over us, and that we are under Grace and not the works of the law we are faced with a decision as to whom we choose to obey:

.....for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. 2Peter 2v19b

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered, and having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ROM 6v13-22

It has been said that God got His people out of Egypt, but getting Egypt out of them was another matter! In a similar way we have been delivered from sin and the condemnation of the law, and yet we find that these are still present with us. Like the call of Joshua we have to "choose this day who you will serve". The key point that Paul is making here is that before the New Life we had no choice but to serve sin, but now having been set free we can choose to serve sin or The Lord.

Our true freedom actually comes when we are willing slaves to the Lord, something which the old nature in us rebels against. Paul deals with this more in chapter 7, but for here we are called by Paul to remember that we need not be subject to the bondage of sin.

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

As Paul also puts it in his letter to the Colossians:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

... you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. Col 3v 1-4 & 9b-11

In fact the more you read Paul's epistles the more you see this golden thread of living in the New Man. As we also have seen it is not just Paul only but also through others like Peter.

Wages or Gift

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. ROM 6v23

Paul finishes this little section with a reminder that the payment for sin is death (the Greek term refers to soldier's pay or allowance). This is the just reward.

However we cannot ever earn eternal life (praise God!) our salvation and new way of life comes as a gift. It is for us to accept it and live in it!

We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation 2COR 6v1-2

Romans Revisited

Chapter 7

Married to Another.

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Romans 7 v 4-6

Paul continues his discussion using another example: Marriage. We have died to our “old husband” and are now free to be married to another, Jesus. There is an active result, which is to serve Him in the new life of the Spirit.

This is not to find fault with the Torah:

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. ROM 7 v 7 -14

The two sons of Abraham and the two covenants.

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.

But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labour pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband."

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.

But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son." Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. GAL 4 v22-ch5 v 1

This is Paul in his letter to the Galatians where they were in particular danger of going into Judaism. So whilst this is specifically talking about not drifting into legalism we must also note its intent in terms of living the life of grace and inheritance of the New Covenant. A life according to the Spirit and not the flesh.

We know that wars have been fought to protect people's basic liberty. We have a war also to win.

Romans Revisited

Terra Infirma

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ROM 7 v 15-23

We may be “seated with Christ in Heavenly Places”, but it seems that our feet are still on a sick and shifting world. Jesus stated that whilst we had been made clean, we need our feet to be cleansed regularly even though our bodies have been cleansed. We pick up the dust and grime of life.

So having presented some amazing revelation of the New Life and freedom that we have, Paul then addresses the ‘present reality’. As a practical rabbi he is only too aware that sin and the sinful nature is still very much present and in the next two chapters of Romans he looks at how to handle this conflict.

It is also good to remember the words of Jesus:

*And he said to them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross **daily**, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. Luke 9v23-24*

So whilst we have ‘once in a lifetime’ key events in our life such as conversion and baptism, and whilst we know that we are a new creation and made fully righteous in Him, yet we have a daily walk to perform where we take up the cross and follow Jesus. The modern phrase “we all have our cross to bear” does not do this justice, since this is not about handling the trials of life but a complete death to self and living to God.

There seems to be two errors that have been around for some time and are even active today:

1. Trying to be Holy through the flesh.

This is to drift back to the works of the law or other legalistic practices, by trying to be holy through our own efforts. Such groups often end up becoming critical, harsh and intolerant.

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Galatians 3v3

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," which all concern things which perish with the using, according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. Col 2v20-23

2. Name it and Claim it.

This is where we lay claim to “our rights” in the Word and claim that we are already holy. This is of course true but then goes on to try and deny that sin and problems still exist. This is often part of a ‘faith culture’ which when taken to extremes moves out of the truth. Ironically this path can also in its own way become legalistic and self-righteous (remember the Pharisee and the tax collector)

The account of Jesus and his discourse with the Pharisees in John 8 is very poignant. This is where Jesus was inviting them “you shall know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free”, yet they could not receive because they were in self-deception. Part of coming to know the Truth is being prepared to know the truth about ourselves and deal with it.

Romans Revisited

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1John v7-10

The denying of reality can become like the story of the emperor's new clothes, and we certainly have the warning to the church at Laodicea that we all need to take to heart:

"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing', and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Rev 3 v 17-22

The truth is in the balance of Scripture with regard to these things. Yes we do need to live our New Life by faith and we must actively hold a good confession. Yet we also have to be real about where we are in all this and the part we have to play in the outworking of this in our lives.

.....work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Phil 2v 12b-13

At the end of the day we are called to deny the self, which is different to self-denial or denying reality. This is where it is worth understanding Imputed and Imparted.

Imputed and Imparted

For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."

.... And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification. Rom 4 v 3-8 & 22-25

..... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ROM 10v 9b-10

It is clearly our faith in the completed work of Jesus in His Blood, crucifixion and resurrection that saves us and makes us righteous. It is through our faith God declares us righteous, and of course our righteousness is in the Righteous One.

However getting back to one of our previous points we also have to recognise that faith without works is dead, and that from our faith comes a true work of Grace in our lives. This is the impartation of the new life by the Holy Spirit which we should expect to grow in us as we walk in Him. So imputed righteousness remains and is our constant covering whilst the imparted grows.

Romans Revisited

It is like the baby that is born already as an heir, but through life must grow and be trained to become a full son. Thus we are not becoming holy through the works of the law, since in Him we are already holy, but through the work of the new man in us.

It is in this process of sanctification that the conflict of the old and the new natures in us come to the surface. This is what Paul is addressing:

For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.
ROM 7v22-25

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. GAL 5v17-18

What is Paul saying when he says with his mind and with his flesh ?

We know from what he has already said that we are not to be Jekyll and Hyde and continue in sin but blame it on the flesh, or even the devil.

The answer is about putting on the New Man, which is having the mind of Christ and living in the New Covenant which is His Torah written in our hearts. This comes across more in the next chapter, but first we will consider the Mind of Christ:

Romans Revisited

The Mind of Christ.

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 8v10

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Rom 12v2

... that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Eph 4v 21b - 24

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ 1Cor 2v13-16

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life... Phil 2:5 -16

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 1Peter 4v1-2

Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works Which You have done; And Your thoughts toward us Cannot be recounted to You in order; If I would declare and speak of them, They are more than can be numbered. Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart." Psalm 40 v 5-8

Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble. LORD, I hope for Your salvation, and I do Your commandments. My soul keeps Your testimonies, and I love them exceedingly. I keep Your precepts and Your testimonies, for all my ways are before You. Psalm 119 v165 - 168

Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. Psa 1v1-3

Thus we can see that the Mind of Christ is very much to do with a heart of service, obedience and love for God, His ways, His Word and His will. It is the law written in our hearts and an inborn love to serve and worship Him that comes from a thankful joyous and grateful heart for His salvation.

Romans Revisited

The Litter Bug



"'Litterbug' isn't politically correct. They prefer 'environmentally challenged.'"

People in Brighton and Hove have to meet an annual clean-up bill of nearly £3 million.

This is because **local people** continue to drop litter. The Tidy Britain Group claims this is the amount it costs every year in the two towns to clear-up after litter louts. The charity said litter made the town look ugly, put visitors and firms off the area and increased the vermin population.

However much we might complain to the council we all know that the real problem is with the people. This may be a trite example, but we can see a similarity between this and the Law. The problem is not to do with Torah, or God, but the problem of sin comes from us !

A "No litter law" law has been passed stating that that anyone dropping litter within Brighton and Hove town center will be subject to a £50 penalty.

What different approaches and viewpoints might you expect from:

1, Judaism.

2. Antinomians

4. The New Man

Also what is our approach to having to drive at 30mph and other speed limits?

Romans Revisited

5. Chapter 8

The Law of the Spirit of Life in Messiah

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ROM 8 v 1-6

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. GAL 5 v 15 - 25

Paul now reaches a pinnacle of his discourse. We have no condemnation in Jesus. Once again we are living in the times of Messiah who has brought us freedom. It is life in Jesus that makes us free.

The key is to live in the life that has been given us through the Holy Spirit. So in a sense it is not what we don't do that sets us free but it is what we do.

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. EPH 3v14-21

Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God. Eph 5 v 14-21

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: COL 1v 9-14

Romans Revisited

The Carnal Mind.

For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8v6-8

The carnal mind here speaks of the life thoughts and intentions being without reference to the Spirit. Humanism is the extreme result of this.

It is not just to do with having sinful thoughts as some imply, but to do with our whole manner of living. This can be good or bad, but the point is it with God or outside of Him?

We who are of the Spirit must live our lives with reference to the Spirit, we as said earlier we have the Mind of Christ.

The issue is what is the source of our life and who we are in Him.

Life and Death by the Spirit.

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ROM 8 v 9-11

We must see that we owe the flesh (the natural man) nothing. Our call is to live in the life that we now have in Jesus.

Once again the key (which is so easy to miss) is that the Spirit is Life, and it is by living this that we put to death the deeds of the flesh. We work with the Holy Spirit to deal with the flesh.

The mistakes we must avoid are:

- Trying to make the flesh better. Death is the only answer!
- Trying to put to death the flesh by the flesh.
This is legalism and often self-basement, which as we have read in Colossians does nothing to quell then flesh.

Manifestation if the Sons of God.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. ROM 8 v14-17

We see in this part a marvelous statement as to who we really, and that not just us but all creation eagerly waits for that final appearing of the New Man. We too should have that real yearning in us for this New Life to become more and more manifest. We can be groaners but not moaners!

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. ROM 8v22-25

The Jews themselves often speak of the "spirit of the Messiah".

Romans Revisited

The Help of the Holy Spirit

If we are like a chrysalis struggling to get out of our old nature, then we have to have patience and perseverance. But we do have the work and help of the Helper:

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. ROM 8 v 26-30

If you love Me, keep My commandments, and I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever: the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. John 14 v15-18

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. John 16v12-15

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Eph 5 v 17-21

GOD IS FOR US.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ROM 8 v 32-34

This is, if we are honest, something we do not always grasp. If we really did then our obedience and walk would be much more straightforward. God **is** for us. He has given everything we need and even now he is working out His best plan for us. Yeshua Himself (as faithful High Priest) is continually making intercession on our behalf before the Father

Thus if He is for us, who can be against us? And of course **all** things work together for good to those who love Him. We carry that 'crown' of his favour upon our lives, and we need to see the amazing privilege of this.

Romans Revisited

We cannot be separated from His Love

Paul now reaches the pinnacle of his message:

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom 8 v 35-39

Paul also encouraged those at Corinth to know the glory of our salvation, not just in this life but in the glory of the Resurrection:

And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.

As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

As also David even saw, that the Lord was always with both for this life and the life to come

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever. Psalm 23

Romans Revisited

ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

Paul has been explaining the election of God, justification by faith and the calling of both Jew and Gentile into one ecclesia. He reaches the pinnacle of our position in Messiah, looking at the glory of what the Lord has done in us as His firstfruits.

He now pauses to consider Israel, to

- Look at their position;
- Understand how they got there
- Show what lessons that the church must learn
- Look at the whole relationship of the Gentile Church and Israel
- Proclaim the future

ROMANS 9

Paul's own Heart

I tell the truth in Christ; I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; Romans 9 v 1-4

Paul as an intercessor would rather sacrifice his own salvation if it could mean the salvation of his race. Although he is called as the Apostle to the Gentiles his heart is still very much burdened for his own people, and his prayer is constantly that they might turn to Yeshua:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. ROM 10v1

So whatever else is taught we know that there is absolutely no way he abandoned the Jews in his heart and would never have taught so. As has been stated before, Paul's principle was "to the Jew first then the Gentile". He may have 'shaken the dust off his feet' as a testimony against them in their rejection in various places, but it seems that until the end he was a Jew who still had a passion for the salvation of his own people.

Flesh and Faith

Paul also makes the point which we covered earlier concerning who Israel is. We have the Israel that is defined by ancestry and the true Israel that comes from the 'children of the promise':

*But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, **"In Isaac your seed shall be called."** That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. ROM 9 v 6-8*

This has been covered in the first section of this study concerning who is a Jew? and the true circumcision. Once again Paul is making an essential distinction between those who truly belong to God (His Children) whether Jew or Gentile. These are the children of the Promise and of Faith.

Paul uses the analogy of Isaac and Ishmael to distinguish between those born of faith and those from the works of the flesh. As stated by Jesus:

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit". John 3v6

You cannot mix the two, which is a principle which we should pay serious heed to in our own individual and corporate walk! Stated by Paul to the Galatians:

Romans Revisited

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain, if indeed it was in vain?

*Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.
GAL 3v1-7*

Paul is also stating the basic foundational truth about faith and sonship. As we have discovered earlier the faith that Paul refers to is not a passive, conceptual or theological one, but active, practical and fruit producing.

It is God's Choice that counts!

And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses [EXO 33v19] "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour?

What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? ROM 9 v 10-24.

In Romans 8 Paul had covered the area of election, and we have a further extension of this in terms of not only those saved, but also those who are hardened, citing Pharaoh as an example.

As Paul is inferring this seems to go against natural justice and even his own quote that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1TIM 2v4).

As a Jew Paul would not find it difficult to hold these two principles together, purely on the basis of accepting the character and ways of God without having to understand or explain it. At the end of the day:

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counsellor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding? ISA 40 v 12-14

This is certainly something worthy of great study, but the essential point that Paul is continuing to make is that the calling and salvation of God for both Jews and Gentiles is through His mercy alone and is entered into by faith and not works. It is not how much effort we have put in or what we have achieved, it is because of the Mercy of God alone that we are saved!

You in Your mercy have led forth the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength To Your holy habitation. Exodus 15v13

The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy. PSA 147v11

He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy Pr 28:13

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Psa 107:1

Romans Revisited

A People from the Nations.

As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God."

Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth." And as Isaiah said before: "Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah." ROM 9 v 25-29

Paul returns to his theme concerning the Jews and Gentiles, especially that the Lord would also bring His salvation to other nations, which he also emphasises again in chapter 10:

But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move you to anger by a foolish nation." But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me, but to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people." Romans 10 v 19-21

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him, for "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." ROM 10 v 12-13

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, Eph 2v4-8

So what we have are 5 recurring principles that Paul is continually driving home in Romans:

1. Salvation and Righteousness is through faith in Yeshua and by the Mercy of God alone. It cannot be through the works of men, whether Jew or Gentile.
2. God has called both Jews and Gentiles into His Kingdom. (The One New Man)
3. The true faith (and a true Jew) is expressed by the living in the Newness of Life, the New Covenant.
4. There is a lineage of the 'children of promise' that stems from Abraham, and a lineage of 'children of the flesh' or disobedience. This is not an ancestral line but spiritual one that divides the two. True believers are Abraham's seed not by natural birth but by faith.
5. God's judgments will come on those who ultimately disobey.

Romans Revisited

Sought it not by Faith.

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." ROM 9 v 30 – 33

For I bear them [Israel] witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them", but the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, "who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead), but what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ROM 10v 2-11

Paul's continuing argument is that the Jews were a people very zealous for God, but that zeal was completely misplaced and actually causing them to miss the target of the Torah which is Messiah.

Paul in the above passage was quoting from Moses in his final address to the Children of Israel:

For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess.

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

So really Moses himself was saying that to keep the commandments was not beyond them, it was there for them to keep **by faith**, clinging and relying on the Lord. The commandments could never and will never be kept by our own strength.

What was intended to lead them to Messiah had been twisted and misinterpreted to actually cause them to miss Him. Jesus was continually challenging the Jews to reconsider their understanding of the laws and return to faith. In fact His statement that He came to fulfil the Torah can be interpreted as He came to give the Torah its proper meaning!

Despite this (and also because of the foreknowledge and plan of God as we have seen) Jesus was to be rejected by the religious leaders:

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him, but as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1 v 10-14

Romans Revisited

Yeshua's anger was particularly kindled against those Pharisees and Scribes because they were not only blinded themselves, but in their zeal were stopping others from receiving Life:

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. MATT 23v13

Such a one was Paul until the Lord in His Mercy revealed Himself to Paul. We also see this happening today in Israel, particularly in regard to the opposition to Jewish believers in Yeshua.

Again, at the heart of this problem is the issue of faith or works, and essentially whether we trust on God's mercy or seek to justify ourselves before God by the works of our hands. This goes right back to Cain and Abel!

Jesus has instructed us to "Seek first the Kingdom of God and **His** Righteousness", but the twist in Judaism was to seek the Kingdom of God through **our** righteousness.

As Paul had said they stumbled at that stumbling stone: faith in Jesus as our salvation and righteousness:

Open to me the gates of righteousness. I will enter into them. I will give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous will enter into it.

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me, and have become my Salvation [Yeshua]

The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it!

Save us now, we beg you, LORD! LORD, we beg you, send prosperity now.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. Psalm 118v19-26

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD'S doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder. MATT21v42-44

There is also a very telling verse in Psalm 103;

He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. Psalm 103v7

If the Jews had understood the Ways of God, rather than just the external observation of His deeds, then the story would have been very different.

All this is a very important lesson for us all. Religion can enter in insidiously to gradually replace faith in Him by the works of man. We have certainly seen the same mistakes occur in Church history, even to the point where believers are persecuted by the very ones that should embrace them!

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted, and do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 1 COR 10v1-11

Romans Revisited

Faith Comes through Hearing (obeying)

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. DEU 6 v4-5

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation." But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me." But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people." ROM 10v14-21

We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed?

So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.

Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest."

It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.

*Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. **Hebrews 3v14 – 4v11***

Romans Revisited

The core problem of Israel both in the wilderness and subsequently in their see-saw history through Judges and Kings is idolatry:

For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He.

They have corrupted themselves; they are not His children, Because of their blemish: A perverse and crooked generation. Do you thus deal with the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is He not your Father, who bought you? Has He not made you and established you? Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you:

When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest, Hovers over its young, Spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so the LORD alone led him, and there was no foreign god with him.

He made him ride in the heights of the earth, That he might eat the produce of the fields; He made him draw honey from the rock, And oil from the flinty rock; curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock, with fat of lambs; and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the choicest wheat; and you drank wine, the blood of the grapes. But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; you grew fat, you grew thick, you are obese! Then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons, not to God; to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear.

Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten the God who fathered you. And when the LORD saw it, He spurned them, Because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters. And He said: 'I will hide My face from them; I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, Children in whom is no faith. They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation. DEU 32v 2-21

Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, house of Israel? Yes, you have borne the tent of your king and the shrine of your images, the star of your god, which you made for yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus says the LORD, whose name is the God Tzeva'ot. Amos 5v25-27

But this does not seem to be what Paul is describing in terms of Righteousness by Works.

So what changed? We have no definite indication in Scripture, but we do know that we see a rise in Judaism from after the return from captivity. During this period the Second Temple was built at Jerusalem and the small state of Judea established there initially under the protection of the Persian government. There were also thriving Jewish communities in Egypt, Babylonia and elsewhere, where alternative beliefs and institutions, including the synagogue, were also developing. From the writings in Ezra and Nehemiah we see a desire to avoid past history of idolatry and also to restore Jewishness.

The crisis of Assimilation and religious persecution under Antiochus IV (175-163BCE), led to the successful revolt led by Judas Maccabaeus which liberated Jerusalem in 164 BCE, and once again gave Israel a short period of independence. At this time several varieties of Judaism began to emerge, and by the end of the second century BCE three groups can be identified in Judea, Sadducees, Essenes and Pharisees, whilst in the Diaspora important Jewish communities were emerging in Babylonia

With all this came the establishment of a religious framework of works, rules and regulations that may have started with the best of intentions of building a wall to stop the people turning to idolatry, or being assimilated, but ultimately would also build an arrogance and a veil that would prevent many from seeing and knowing Messiah when He came. Also on building their 'fence of the Law' they began to lose the true meaning of Torah and the Fear of the Lord:

Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, ISA 29v13.

Romans Revisited

The Living God

We are similarly warned in the Church to continue to serve the Living God:

Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. HEB 3v10-13

It is possible for human religion to creep in replacing faith in the Lord who is alive, dynamic and active, with a set of traditions, rules and works that have the appearance of faith but deny its power.

Such was the condition of many of the religious leaders at the time of Jesus.

Romans Revisited

Has God Cast Away His People?

Having been talking about how Israel has missed the target, and that salvation has come to the Gentiles, he then puts the balance back concerning Israel:

*I say then, has God cast away His people? **Certainly not!** For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew., or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. ROM 11 v 1-5*

His main argument here is that there was already a significant remnant that had received the election and were Believers, including of course Paul himself.

In fact at this time there was a sizeable church in Jerusalem that stood as a major following that rivaled the Pharisees in number. Also counting the many Jewish Believers dispersed throughout Israel and Asia there was certainly still a large remnant.

Although this may have been reduced to a very small thread throughout Church history, yet we even see in our day resurgence on this remnant in Israel and throughout the world. Is this the firstfruits of what is yet to come?

Nehemiah remembered the mercy of the Lord in not destroying His people utterly, even though He would have fully been justified to do so.

But after they had rest, they again did evil before You. Therefore You left them in the hand of their enemies, So that they had dominion over them; Yet when they returned and cried out to You, You heard from heaven; And many times You delivered them according to Your mercies, and testified against them, That You might bring them back to Your law. Yet they acted proudly, and did not heed Your commandments, but sinned against Your judgments, 'Which if a man does, he shall live by them.' And they shrugged their shoulders, stiffened their necks, and would not hear.

Yet for many years You had patience with them, and testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen; therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. Nevertheless in Your great mercy You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them; for You are God, gracious and merciful. NEH 9 v 29-31

Though in the case of Nehemiah it clearly refers to the return from the first captivity, yet it is a general principle that still applies today as can be seen in the table of key scriptures concerning Israel. The mercy and faithfulness of God is also echoed elsewhere:

This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.

"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" LAM 3v 22-24

For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you. MAL 3v 6-7a

Our own salvation is totally dependant on both God's Faithfulness and His Mercy through the complete and sacrificial work of Jesus.

Thus to make any claim that God has totally finished with Israel puts our own faith on shaky ground, since if He can change His mind about them, why not about us ! To argue Replacement Theology is effectively to testify against the character of the Lord.

Romans Revisited

Eyes that cannot see, Ears that cannot hear

What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day"

And David says: "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always." I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. ROM 11v 7-11

Paul returns to his line of thought in Romans 9, concerning vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath, but here he is applying it to those Jews that have received Yeshua as Messiah, and those that had not. As we have mentioned previously their own self-righteousness and resistance has become a snare to them, and they cannot see the Truth.

Paul uses an amalgam of quotations from the Law and Prophets which is worth expanding upon:

Now Moses called all Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders. Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day. And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet. You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or similar drink, that you may know that I am the LORD your God." DEU 29 v 2-6

And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. ISA 6v9-10

Pause and wonder! Blind yourselves and be blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with intoxicating drink. For the LORD has poured out on you The spirit of deep sleep, And has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, namely, the seers.

The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I cannot, for it is sealed." Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, "Read this, please." And he says, "I am not literate."

Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among this people, a marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden." ISA 29v9-14

But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2Cor 3 14- 18

Romans Revisited

Salvation Comes to the Gentiles.

In all this failure Paul speaks of the mystery of salvation. The essential point in all this is that from the very even through Moses, God declared what would happen, and that through the fall and blindness of Israel He would bring salvation to the Gentiles.

Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them.

For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

Paul speaks of another phase in God's plan that speaks of a restoration which shall indeed be glorious. There is yet to be another calling of Lazarus, which is life from the dead for Israel.

Indeed his hope is that though the door that has been opened up to the Gentiles Paul may yet see more Jews saved as they are provoked to jealousy!

Romans Revisited

The Olive Tree

For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches, and if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear, for if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

We need to note a number of points from this:

1. The firstfruit and root is the original stems from the calling of Abraham and includes the line of true faith and calling of God.
2. **Some**, not all, of the branches were broken off.
Paul has already established that there was a remnant of Believer from the Jews.
3. Gentiles are a wild olive tree which grows in the field, bears little or no fruit, and is generally of no value. They were by nature "sinners of the Gentiles", and outside of the cultivated Olive tree which is the Commonwealth of Israel.
4. It is not normal to graft a wild branch into a cultivated tree. It was also not normal to graft into olive, and there is a Jewish saying "there is no engrafting on olives".
This is purely the work of God's Mercy.
5. Gentiles thus receive their life from the root and life that is in the tree. In the previous discussion we can see this as extending to the faith of Abraham and the life of the Word. We should also be very familiar with the words of Jesus about the Vine and the branches. Similarly our true life is in Him and Him alone.
6. Since it is entirely by faith we stand we cannot ourselves be arrogant. As stated before, if we claim that God has finished with Israel, then He could equally finish with us!
Our response should be one of humility and thankfulness.
7. Paul echoes back his argument in Romans 9 about the vessels of mercy and judgment. If God is like that then we must continue in the Grace of God. Resorting to works and entering into unbelief could result in also being cut off. This is also has some similarity with the words of Jesus about the vine and also warnings to some of the churches in Revelation.
8. God is able to graft the Jews back in to their original Tree of Faith, since they came from that tree and have its character. Even though an olive tree can seem dead it is able to burst back into life given the right conditions. So it is with Jews who find Yeshua. This is something we are beginning to hear of more and more in our day as more Jews are coming to the Yeshua.

Romans Revisited

Do not be Ignorant or Arrogant.

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

The blindness in part can refer not just to those Jews that have not believed in Yeshua, but that also this type of blindness is partial. The Lord has allowed a strand of faith to continue to this day, even after the destruction of the Temple when Judaism had to re-invent itself. There have still been 'heroes' of the Jewish faith that have kept alive the meaning of being a Jew, and from which even we can learn.

This blindness is more like "tunnel vision" or extreme short-sightedness that they cannot quite make out the complete truth and the fumble and stumble at the truth concerning Messiah. Yet we know that many priests (and probably Pharisees) believed and even in our day hear of rabbis coming into faith!

There are different interpretations of the term 'fullness of the Gentiles, which is out of scope of this study, but what we can say is that the overall sense of what Paul is saying that there is a time coming when the blindness or veil will be lifted and all Israel (Jews and Gentiles ?) will be saved.

That is the time of life from the dead. Is this part of the completion of the prophecy regarding the Valley of Dry Bones? Paul here is quoting from Isaiah 59v20, which is worth expanding:

He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; the coastlands He will fully repay. So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, The Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him.

The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, says the LORD. As for Me, says the LORD, this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the LORD, from this time and forevermore. . ISA 59v16-21

We also have a key prophecy of Zechariah:

And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself, and their wives by themselves; all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.

In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. ZEC 12v10 -13v1

Romans Revisited

Beloved Enemies

Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.

For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?"

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. ROM 11v 28-36

Paul now completes this section with the crux of the matter.

Paul knew only too well how the unbelieving Jews were enemies for he had been beaten, persecuted, stoned, imprisoned largely due to their opposition. So for the present time (and this is true for today) we still find them enemies of the Gospel because of their God-allowed blindness.

We cannot and should not pretend otherwise.

However because of election they are to be loved because of the patriarchs. Still within them in their 'DNA' is that character and nature that God instilled in Abraham.

We do not know which of the 'dead branches' might yet be grafted back in so we are called to love them and show mercy as He continues to do, even in judgement.

As Paul has also said we must live our new Life to the full and ensure that we live fully in the Grace of God that some Jews may also be led back to the Lord through jealousy of what we have been given through their fall.

We are of the same family, through the One New Man in Yeshua and we have a wayward brother to love and intercede for.

God has allowed this all to happen that He can show Mercy to all. His wisdom, knowledge and power are far above anything we can imagine!

Finally we are to remember that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. We rejoice in this for ourselves and we must certainly rejoice and acknowledge that this is true for Israel, and concerning His Covenant and Promises.

Lessons from Ruth

In this entire context it is good to consider the account of Ruth Boaz and Naomi

A deliverer (Goel) will come from Zion The "Ruth Church" has the privilege of being allied to the Redeemer to the help bring restoration to Israel.

Naomi (My Delight) wants to be called Mara (Bitterness) in her despair and loss, and Israel has tasted bitterness and contention. Her other daughters leave her but Ruth stays by her regardless of the consequences "your people will be My People and Your God my God".

It is ultimately through Ruth (a Gentile) coming under Boaz's covering and ultimately alliance, that Naomi (Israel) is restored!

We have the privilege of playing our part like Ruth to bring in the restoration of Israel through our love, faithfulness to a bitter Naomi and also through our union with Messiah.

This is something we should grasp, but not take the analogy too far!

Romans Revisited

The following are some example verses regarding Israel. Please note that this list is far from inclusive!

The Church and Israel

Ephesians 2 v 12-14	Remember at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were far way have been brought near through the Blood of Christ, for He himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of separation.
	His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two [Jews and Gentiles], thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the Cross.
Ephesians 2v19	Consequently you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.
Romans 11 v 17	And you being a wild olive tree were grafted in among them and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree.
Romans 11 v 28-29	As far as the Gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account, but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs. For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.
Romans 11v15	For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be, but life from the dead?
Romans 11v12	If their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!
Romans 11v18	Do not be arrogant you do not support the root, but the root supports you.
Romans 11v32	For God has committed them all [Jews and Gentiles] to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.
John 10v16	And they shall become one Flock with one Shepherd

The Future of Israel

Deuteronomy 4v27 & 30-31	And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and you shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.
	When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice, (for the LORD your God <i>is</i> a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.
Deuteronomy 30v1-6	Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call <i>them</i> to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you.
	If <i>any</i> of you are driven out to the farthest <i>parts</i> under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.
	And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Romans Revisited

Jeremiah 31v27-28	Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, <i>that</i> as I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy, and to afflict, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD.
Jeremiah 30v10-11	Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,' says the LORD, 'Nor be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar, And your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, And no one shall make <i>him</i> afraid. For I <i>am</i> with you,' says the LORD, 'to save you; Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, Yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, And will not let you go altogether unpunished.'
Jeremiah 31v10-11	Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare <i>it</i> in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd <i>doth</i> his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of <i>him that was</i> stronger than he.
Amos 9v13-15	The days are coming, declares the LORD, when the reaper will be overtaken by the ploughman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills. I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them, says the LORD your God.
Isaiah 11v12	He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.
Isaiah 14v1	For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land. The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob.
Zechariah 10v6	I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Jacob. I will bring them back because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside.
Ezekiel 36v 28	And you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers. So you will be My people, and I will be your God.
Isaiah 60v21	Then all your people will be righteous. They will possess the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.
Ezekiel 36 v 10	But you O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come.
Isaiah 49v 19	For your waste and desolate places, and the land of your destruction, will even now be too small for the inhabitants.
Hosea 14v4-7	I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from him. I will be like the dew to Israel; He shall grow like the lily, And lengthen his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread; His beauty shall be like an olive tree, And his fragrance like Lebanon. Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; They shall be revived <i>like</i> grain, And grow like a vine. Their scent <i>shall be</i> like the wine of Lebanon.
Zechariah 8v13	And it shall come to pass that, just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and you shall be a blessing.
Zephaniah 3v 12-13	I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel Shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.
Isaiah 60v3	And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.
Psalms 132v17	There I will make the horn of David grow; I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed.

Romans Revisited

Jerusalem

**Isaiah
62 v 1-7**

For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace, And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, And her salvation as a lamp *that* burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the LORD will name.

You shall also be a crown of glory In the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem In the hand of your God. You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married.

For as a young man marries a virgin, *So* shall your sons marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, *So* shall your God rejoice over you.

I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, and give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

**Matthew
23v37-39**

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; "for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the LORD

**Luke
21v24**

Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

**Zechariah
12v10
&
13v1**

I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of Grace and Supplication; then they will look upon Me whom they pierced.

.... In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

**Zechariah
1v16**

Thus says the Lord, I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy. My house shall be built in it, says the Lord of Hosts. And a surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.

**Isaiah
60 v 10 & 14**

And foreigners will build up your walls, and their kings will minister to you And they will call you the City of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

**Joel
3v16**

The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem. The heavens and earth will shake, but the Lord will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

**Obadiah
1v17**

But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

**Isaiah
40 v 1-2**

Comfort, yes Comfort My people says your God. Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she has received from the LORD'S hand [the] double for all her sins."

**Isaiah
4v3-4**

It shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy When the Lord has washed away the filth from the Daughters of Zion and purged the blood of Jerusalem.

**Zechariah
8v22**

Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.

**Jeremiah
3v17**

At that time Jerusalem shall be called the Throne of the Lord, and all nations shall be gathered to it, to the Name of the Lord, to Jerusalem.

**Zechariah
8v3**

I will return to Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the Lord of Hosts. The Holy Mountain.

Romans Revisited

Zechariah 14v1-4 & 5, 9	The Day of the Lord is coming I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem ... then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations. In that Day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives ... thus the Lord my God will come and all the saints with you ... and the Lord will be King over all the earth.
Joel 2v32	And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord has called.
Micah 4v1-2	Now it shall come to pass in the latter days <i>That</i> the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

God's Covenant & Promise

Romans 11 V1 & 25-26	Has God cast away His people? Certainly not Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved.
Isaiah 54 v5-10	For your Maker <i>is</i> your husband, The LORD of hosts <i>is</i> His name; And your Redeemer <i>is</i> the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the LORD has called you Like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, Like a youthful wife when you were refused," Says your God. For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you," Says the LORD, your Redeemer. For this <i>is</i> like the waters of Noah to Me; For as I have sworn That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, So have I sworn That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," Says the LORD, who has mercy on you.
Jeremiah 31v3-4a	The LORD has appeared of old to me, <i>saying</i> : "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin of Israel!
Jeremiah 31v35-37	This is what the LORD says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the LORD Almighty is his name: Only if these decrees vanish from my sight, declares the LORD, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me. This is what the LORD says: "Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done," declares the LORD.
Ezekiel 36v22-28	Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. 'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

Romans Revisited

Add some of your own verses:

Romans Revisited

KINGDOM LIVING

Romans Chapter 12 – 16

Very often when we go to meetings or seminars on Kingdom Living, the emphasis is often on faith and power in your life. However from what we hear of the teaching of Jesus, the accounts in Acts, and the writings in the Epistles it seems that the emphasis is much more on living a godly life that honours him. This is not to deny the importance of living our lives in the power of the Spirit, but in kingdom terms, and for our eternal future, character, at the end of the day is more important.

This is the whole point of making disciples, which is people that become like the Master, or even more so as echoed in the words of Jesus, "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven".

Paul has been laying a foundation in his letter to the Roman Church, as follows:

- The wrath of God towards sin and lawlessness has not changed, and is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men
- Man is without excuse, as Creation testifies of God's glory and character.
- All (Jew and Gentile) have sinned and fallen short of His glory and purpose for man. We are all found guilty under the Law whether Jew or Gentile, and all are found disobedient, guilty and deserving of everlasting punishment.
- The Law is Good and Holy, but its work is to highlight sin and bring us in repentance to Messiah. Atonement is only through the Cross and Blood of Yeshua and He alone and only Faith in Him and His Mercy brings salvation. As His judgement is over all so His Mercy also has been made open to all (Jew and Gentile) that come to Him.
- It is the New Life (the New Covenant) that we now live in and not the works of the Law. Israel is our example that we cannot obtain salvation or righteousness through our own works.
- This Law of Life in Messiah is what sets us free. We are dead to the Law through Him and alive to God (not ourselves) in Him.
- A True Jew and True Circumcision come from the heart and the inner life of faith and devotion to Him, not from works or ancestry.
- We now have good works and a godly life as an outworking of the New Creation we have in Yeshua.
- Jew and Gentile have been brought together in Messiah as the One New Man grafted in the Olive Tree of Faith.
- God's Mercy on the Gentiles has come about through the stumbling of Israel; therefore do not be arrogant; for we stand entirely under His mercy through faith.
- All Israel will be saved The gifts and calling of God cannot be revoked!

In Romans chapter 12 we have the great "therefore" of Paul. Of course it is worthwhile remembering that in the original manuscripts we do not have chapters and verses but continuous prose. Paul is actually completing his statement and argument for the end of Chapter 11:

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God— this is your spiritual act of worship. Heb 11v 25-12v1

Romans Revisited

Having laid out treatise Paul, as a good Rabbi now shows the practical outworking of what he has been declaring.

A Living Sacrifice

Firstly he implores the church to get on the right foundation. There is only one truly 'rational' response (reasonable service) which is to offer our lives as a living sacrifice to Him.

This is to be the whole basis of living our New Life. We have recognised that in Christ we are dead to sin, but also in Him alive to God.

This attitude in our walk is vital. It sets us free from works on the one hand, and on the other hand allows the Holy Spirit to impart His life into us to bear godly fruit as we seek to now live not just for Him, but in Him. It essentially guards us from falling into the trap of thinking Grace is a licence to sin and go do and your own thing.

To Paul being dead to sin was not just a theological concept but a practical necessity. Strangely we talk about being dead to sin as a way of life! We have covered this in more detail earlier in the course, but it would be good to repeat some key verses here:

We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.

For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

GAL 2v15-20

*Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, **even so we also should walk in newness of life.** For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.*

*Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, **reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.** ROM 5v 4-11*

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God 2COR 7v1

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ROM 6v-22

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Romans 7 v 4-6

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 1Peter 4v1-2

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. MATT 16v 24-25

Romans Revisited

Finally a sacrifice is something wholly devoted to the Lord, must be the very best and acceptable to God. It should not be as we read in Malachi:

You place defiled food on my altar. But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?' "By saying that the Lord 's Table is contemptible. When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the LORD Almighty.

Now implore God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you? Says the LORD Almighty. Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you, says the LORD Almighty, and I will accept no offering from your hands. MAL 1v7-10

Our sacrifice is our whole lives and not just what we don't really want ourselves! Yet we so often live our lives with the same attitude as we see demonstrated here, where we give God only the remainder of our lives and our time and not all.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. These, O God, You will not despise. PSA 51v17

Finally it is worthwhile to note that it is our **bodies** that we offer. This is not an intellectual or conceptual exercise but a practical walk, since it is our bodies through which we live and work! Our bodies are also the Temple of the Holy Spirit and our lives are an epistle read by all.

Be Transformed

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ROM 12 v2-3

As Paul had stated in Romans 8, we are no longer bound to live under the dictates of our fleshly nature and we are now called to live according the New Life in the Spirit.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ROM 8 v 1-6

We have to go through a re-education process of not merely thinking after our own understanding or the ways of this world and the spirit of man. We are to cultivate a life, mind and spirit that is attached to God, His kingdom, His Ways and His character. This is all in the Greek for transformed, which is "metamorpho", from which we get our word metamorphism.

The renewing of the mind is putting on the New Man as Paul explains in Ephesians:

... that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Eph 4v 21b - 24

Paul finishes with an injunction that this is a 'proving' process. The word used here is the same term as used on the testing or 'proving' of metals by fire to ensure their integrity and fit for use. It is only from this position of a transformed and renewed mind and heart that we can truly know and understand the Lords' will and purpose

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ 1Cor 2v13-16

In all this process we need to be realistic and not go beyond what we have in Him, as He has dealt with us that measure of faith. We are to be wise and have a correct assessment, not being given to pride or over-estimation, yet neither to false humility or self-abasement.

Whether you see your cup as half-full or half-empty, it needs to be correctly measured as a half, and not seen as either full or empty!

Romans Revisited

We need to have a full understanding of who we are in Christ, what we have in Him, our authority and so on, yet at the same time knowing and recognising what work of Grace needs to be going on in our lives.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Phil 2 v 12-13.

For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones. ISA 57v15

Our Manner of Life

Having established the basis of our walk in Newness of life, Paul now explains how it impacts our way of life, attitudes and behaviour.

Body Ministry and Life.

This also leads into the next verses about life in the Body. Paul is saying that we have all been given a measure of faith. We all have a calling and an anointing for that, but it is part of a whole and we must learn to fit into that place we have been called to, not magnifying 'our' ministry, neither trying to be everything and be independent. Individualism is not biblical!

Having started from this foundation we then embark upon our service to Him.

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. ROM 12 v 3-21

We have Body Ministry and Body life reflected in other epistles of Paul such as Ephesians, 1 Corinthians, Philippians and Colossians. Let us take a look at Ephesians and Corinthians by way of example:

Romans Revisited

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." (Now this, "He ascended" —what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head: Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. EPH 4v1-16

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord, and there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?

But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually, and God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. 1COR12v1-31

The excellent way of course leads to his famous passage on Love, but the point to take here is that the gifts are not for us they are for the whole Body and we have a responsibility to use them in love and for the building up of the body. Not to use the gifts He has given us is as bad if not worse than abusing them! Either way the Body is not built up for the work of the ministry of salvation, healing and discipling.

Romans Revisited

Respect for Authority.

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. ROM 13 v 1-7

Though we are no longer of this world we are certainly in it, and are called upon to be law-abiding people. This is for two reasons:

1. God is a God of order and authority, and to act in a disobedient and disorderly manner is going against what He has ordained.
2. We should be showing the nature of God, and behave as such, keeping a good conscience.

We indeed are pilgrims, but as such are called to respect the authorities wherever we are, including paying our taxes.

In Paul's words to Timothy he also emphasised the need not only to obey but pray for the authorities. The aim is that there may be the right conditions for the Gospel. There can be hard and harsh governments and even persecution (as Paul himself knew), but a bigger enemy is anarchy.

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 1TIM2v1-4

Jesus, who could make the biggest claim to be above the law, paid his taxes, albeit in a strange way:

When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?" He said, "Yes." And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?" Peter said to Him, "From strangers." Jesus said to him, "Then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you." MATT 17v24-27

And of course we know only too well the famous words of Jesus concerning paying taxes:

And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at Him. MARK 12v17

To accept, respect and acknowledge is as we have said very important. There is a deeper reason which we also need to grasp, especially in relation to order and authority which comes from God. Satan rebelled against God, and there is always the spirit of rebellion, or the mystery of lawlessness that has to be guarded against even in the Church. What is often at the root can be pride and a lawless spirit, and self-aggrandisement that tries to put us above the law.

.... the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you 2Pet 2v9-13

Romans Revisited

For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.

Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, "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." These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage. Jude v 4-16

It is the meek (those who accept the authority of God not only overall but through His agencies, even when not popular) that shall inherit the earth.

This is a vital and core part of the teaching within scripture. We should also bear this in mind even when in a position of authority we are there as servants not masters:

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. "For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.

"They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.

But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Matt 23v1-12

So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him." "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. John 13 v 12-17

Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.

For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials, and I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Luke 22v 24-30

Romans Revisited

Love Fulfils the Law

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilment of the law. ROM 12 v 8-10

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13v34-35

Seeing you have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth through the Spirit in sincere brotherly affection, love one another from the heart fervently: having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which lives and remains forever. 1PET1v18-23

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. I John 3v11

We all should know the key importance of walking in love, and of course what in Biblical and Hebraic terms is meant by love.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. EPH 2:10

Tit 2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. TITUS 2v14

This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. TITUS 3v8

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Heb 10v24

For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love GAL 5v5-6

Walk in the Light

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts. ROM 13v 11-14

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light." See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. EPH 6v1-17

That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life Phil 2 v15-16a

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. MATT 5v16

Romans Revisited

Living in harmony

In Romans 14 and 15 Paul addresses what we can consider as primarily the problem of Jews and Gentiles living and worshipping together as one Body.

We recall that in Acts the first Church Council at Jerusalem sought to address the issue with Gentile believers coming into the Church, which still primarily consisted of observant Jews. Paul is now also working through the cultural differences and different requirements of Jews and Gentiles in the faith.

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. ROM 14v 1-13

Paul expands on this point in the chapter, and especially stating that there are higher issues:

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves, but he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin. ROM 14 v 17-23.

The essential issue is down to faith and love, and in this to mutually encourage others and not pull them down As Paul stated the Kingdom of God is not about rules and regulations (in this case dietary laws) but life in the Holy Spirit.

As Paul continues:

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. ROM 15v1-7

It is important to keep the 'big picture' ahead of us and walk in love and unity with each other, so we all glorify Him together. As we expect to be accepted by Christ, so we should expect to accept and forgive each other. This is all in accord with the teaching of Jesus, and of course is echoed in other writings of Paul:

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I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. EPH 4v 1-6

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. EPH 4v31 – 5v2

Both Jew and Gentile Abounding in Hope

Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name." And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" And again: "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!" And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope."

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ROM 15v8-13

Practical help to the Jews

For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain.

But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.

Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen. ROM 15v26-33

Why the personal greetings?

This like other epistles is a real letter from a real person to real people. It is a wonderful example of warmth and humanity and this is how in fact God has caused much of Scripture to be written.

These are lessons in themselves, but in this section we do have an injunction:

Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you. ROM 16v16

A timely warning

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. ROM 16v17-20

There are warnings we see in various forms in most of the epistles. There was a real battle even in the fledgling church to keep to the doctrine first delivered and of course the New Life we have been looking at.

Even today the most serious battle is often the unity of the faith, especially as people begin to serve themselves or their own 'ministries' and individualistic lives rather than the Body.

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Other warnings

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.

Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness [anomia]!' MATT 7:15-23

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of [the] many will grow cold. MATT 24v11-12

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra - what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2TIM 3v1-17

The Obedience of Faith

We now finish as we started in Chapter 1 with the obedience of Faith, which as stated in the introduction is a key to unlocking Romans. It is about salvation through faith in Christ, for all nations, once hidden, now revealed. This is the faith that leads to obedience, not by works or terror, but by the love of God shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and His Law being written there:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began, but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen. ROM 16v24-27

Let's just remind ourselves of chapter 1:

*through whom we received grace and apostleship, **for obedience of faith among all the nations**, for his name's sake; Rom 1:5*

*For I am not ashamed of the Good News of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes; for the Jew first, and also for the Greek. **For in it is revealed God's righteousness from faith to faith**. As it is written, "But the righteous shall live by faith." Rom 1:16/17:*

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CONCLUSION

Romans is a foundational work that takes us through the whole area of the Gospel and the whole area of Sin, The Law, Works Grace and Faith.

It covers the call to the people of God to live in the New Covenant and all that it really means, and the importance of true Faith that bears fruit unto God. It is:

A Living Faith

In the Living God

Living in the New Life

Living by the Spirit

Loving His Law

Loving one another

We can now understand that Jesus came at the right time to the right people. Israel were the only ones from the line of Abraham that could really receive the message and then take it to the Gentiles. That is the way God was working. The ground had been prepared over centuries, but even so many Jews missed their greatest day with a resulting blindness and dispossession:

Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?

And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briers and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it.

For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry for help. ISA 5v1-7

He also spoke this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it, and if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'" Luke 13v6-9.

Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate, for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' MATT 23v34-39

The Law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ

God was preparing His people for centuries regarding the coming Messiah through the Torah and the Prophets, ending with John the Baptist who was sent ahead of the ministry of Jesus to bring the message of repentance. Those who were open knew that by the Law they were sinners, could never keep the standard of the Torah and needed God's Mercy. It was them who would receive the Gospel, repent and enter in to the promise of the New Covenant.

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It was through these disciples that a fire was ignited, just like a tinder box, that would spread first through the Jewish world and then to all nations and to the ends of the earth.

Salvation truly did come from the Jews, not only because Yeshua is the Jew of Jews, but also because only in the election could the message of salvation truly be ignited and sent out to the world. If the message went to the Gentiles alone it would have fallen on deaf ears for we had no real concept of the Law and sin.

The departing message of Jesus to the apostles was to call them to reach the nations, and disciple them into being true Jews and truly circumcised:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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, 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. Matt 27 v 18-20

The core of the Gospel, still needs to allow the Law to highlight sin and to warn of the judgement to come, to call to repentance and the offer His Mercy atonement and eternal salvation to those that come to Jesus. True repentance must bear its fruits and lead into the life in the New Covenant and a renewed lifestyle. We are called to make disciples not just believers.

A final few tips (of course there are many more !)

1. Let the Law lead us always to Christ and His forgiveness.
Walk humbly and in open confession before the Lord. Remember that the fear of the Lord is the first part of wisdom.
2. Let the Word of God dwell in you richly. Love the Law for it converts the soul (Psalm 19).
Let Him write it in your hearts as children of the New Covenant and see that our hearts stay circumcised. Remember that it is the from the **heart** that come the issues of life !
3. Be crucified with Him and Live in Him: Be a living sacrifice
4. Live in the New Life in Messiah that sets you free from the law of sin and death
Remember it is by the Spirit and never the flesh or by works.
5. Know who your are and what you have in Christ (imputed) and from this seek to move n maturity and your life being changed by Him through the Word and the Spirit (impartation and transformation)
6. Be (continually) filled with the Spirit. Sing to the Lord in your heart & love Him !
Be always thankful for His Mercy and in everything give thanks
7. Function in the Body as God has given His giftings to you and encourage one another.
8. Walk in Love avoid self-seeking, but seek to serve one and build up others in the Body.
Cultivate your love for God and each other, and
9. Remember the source and importance of Good Works, and of living a godly life in this world.
10. Rejoice in the Lord always and again, rejoice !
11. Keep your Hope and big picture of the New Covenant alive
12. Remember Israel as beloved according to election, both in prayer and practical help.
Consider the example and lessons in Ruth.

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction, but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen. JUDE v 20-21

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 1 John 3v2-3

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2COR7v1

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Where is all this leading? The New Jerusalem!

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.

The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light, and the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there), and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."

Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. REV 21 22v1 -17

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Write your own Conclusion

There is so much length and breadth of what could be said, and any conclusion seems so inadequate, so perhaps it is now best to let you complete the final part yourself, and write in those things that for you are the most important

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. ROM 15v13.

The Grace of God be with you

Psalm 19

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse shows His handiwork.

**Day after day they speak and night after night they reveal knowledge.
There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.**

Their instruction has been spread through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

He has set a place in the heavens for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and like a champion rejoicing to run his race.

Its rising is from one end of the sky and its circuit to the other, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;

The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;

The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

They are to be desired more than gold, Yes, more than very fine gold.

They are also sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.

Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and kept innocent from great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.