

Notes on

Paulus' Letter to the Romans

Authorship and Date

The letter to the Romans is one of the undisputed letters of Paulus of Tarsus. The letter is attested unanimously throughout church history and appears in the earliest collections of Paulus' writings, including the early manuscript p⁴⁶, which was redated in 1988 to the first century.

The date of the letter is c. 54-55 CE, as evidenced by several internal issues. Paulus was just finishing his collection for the poor Christians in Jerusalem (15:25-27) and appears to have been on his way there. This would make the letter follow 1 Corinthians, as evidenced by 1C 16:1ff., where Paulus had not yet traveled through Macedonia on his way to Jerusalem. This appears to coincide approximately with the time of Paulus' writing of 1 Timotheos, which was also written shortly after Paulus' trip through Makedonia. A year can be placed on the letter on account of Acts. In Acts 19:21, Paulus was planning to return to Jerusalem through Makedonia -- at approximately the time he wrote 1 Corinthians. He may have written this letter at any time during the trip recorded in Acts 20:4 - 21:14, perhaps slightly before or after the first letter to Timotheos. If the last chapter belongs with the rest, and there is some doubt about that, then Timotheos was with Paulus. The letter may have been written, then, during the three months spent in Greece (Ac 20:3), or later at Troas (after Timotheos rejoined Paulus, Ac 20:6f.), or some time later on the trip (ch. 21), apparently before the group reached Ptolemais (21:7).

At the time, Paulus was staying with someone named Gaius (16:23), and so it is quite possible that the letter was written during one of his longer stays.

Commentary

Paulus, a slave of Anointed Jesus, a chosen envoy, separated for God's good message (which was announced previously through his prophets in holy writings) about that son of his

The greeting is short and slightly untraditional. Paulus mentions the Messiah (Anointed One) immediately. His position with respect to the Anointed One is "slave" and "chosen envoy." He acknowledges Jesus as his superior and makes mention of his having been sent by Jesus (Acts 9) with "God's good message."

The terminology here is somewhat different. Normally, "God's message" is used to refer to the Messianic teachings, but here, "God's good message" is the term. Paul will regularly refer to the internalization of the Torah by Jesus as the "good message," and in this introduction he explicitly indicates that the good message is from God. Not only that, but also the good message has been a consistent one, for God had told the earlier prophets about it and about the Anointed One who would bring the message.

*who was born out of the seed of David (according to the flesh),
who was designated God's son with power (according to the spirit of holiness), out of his
resurrection from the dead:
Anointed Jesus our Lord.*

Paulus' introduction explains the Anointed One from a Jewish standpoint. He was, physically, a descendant of David, as every Jewish reader would know. He was "designated God's son with power," that is, he was anointed as Messiah, given miraculous signs to prove his identity. The greatest of these signs -- and most important -- was his resurrection from the dead, which proved that he had the "spirit of holiness," the attitude of being set apart to serve God. Paulus establishes Jesus as "Anointed" -- as the Messiah, chosen and empowered to serve his holy mission -- and as Lord, our superior.

*Through him we received favor and a sending out for the listening of trust among all the nations
on behalf of his name, among whom you are also Anointed Jesus' called ones.*

The Anointed One showed God's generosity (favor) to the envoys and sent them out to Jews of all nations (and to the gentiles, although Paulus intends this of Jews first). The readers, who have been influenced by Judaizers, recognized this as a reference to the mission of the Twelve to the Jewish people. The purpose of the sending of the envoys was to encourage "the listening of trust" among the hearers. That is, the hearers of the envoys' message hopefully would follow what they heard and trust in Jesus as Messiah. Among those who became Christians this way were the readers themselves, and so Paulus affirms that God sent Jesus, who sent envoys to the Roman Jews, who came to acknowledge Jesus for who he was.

To all those of God's beloved ones who are in Rome, called holy ones.

1:7 *Hello to you, and peace from God our Father and from Lord Anointed Jesus.*

This is a more standard greeting. Paulus identifies his readers, Roman Christians. He acknowledges that they are set apart for God -- holy ones -- just as Jesus had received the spirit (attitude) of holiness.

8 *First indeed, I thank my God (through Anointed Jesus) about all of you, because your trust is being announced in the whole creation. For my witness is God, to whom I give religious service in my spirit in the good message of his son, as I make unceasing remembrance of you. I am always making supplication in my prayers as to how I might somehow make my way well to come to you.*

The author thanks God through Jesus as a reminder to the readers that both their identity and Paulus' (as holy ones) comes through the Messiah. Had the Messiah not come, they would not be who they are. He praises the readers for their trust in Jesus as Messiah, which he affirms he has been telling others about.

Paulus gives "religious service" to God not in physical ritual acts but "in my spirit." This coincides with the teachings of Jesus that internalize the Torah, and so, Paul's religious service comes "in the good message" of the Anointed One.

For I long to see you, so that I might impart to you a certain free spiritual gift for your establishment. Now this is so that we might be comforted together while I am among you through your trust in one another and also in me.

But brothers, I don't want you to be ignorant. Because I often purposed to come to you and was hindered until the upcoming time, so that I might have some fruit among you also, just as I had also among the remaining nations. To both Greeks and barbarians, to both wise and mindless, I am a debtor. In the same way, by the ability that is mine, I am eager to announce the good message also to those of you in Rome.

It appears that Paulus intends to transfer a miraculous gift of some sort to the Romans, but we see later that the "free spiritual gift" is not the sort of signs and wonders that he works but is the good message, which he is anxious to talk with them about. They would learn from Paulus, then, that he follows the same message of freedom that they were first taught. In light of the rest of the letter, Paulus is foreshadowing its contents, for what they need is to realize that Jesus has set them free from legalism and ritual.

Paulus acknowledges his "debt" to all kinds of people, setting up an equality among various classes of people. The Greeks considered themselves scholarly, and yet Paulus was in debt also to "barbarians." In a few short lines, he will establish equality between Jewish people and non-Jews, but he must set the stage first.

The Equality of the Human Race

For I am not ashamed of the good message, for it is God's power for salvation for all who trust, both for the Jew first and for the Greek. For God's ethics is revealed in it out of trust, into trust, just as it was written, "The just one, out of trust, will live."

The good message, in a nutshell, is that the Messiah came (in the person of Jesus), teaching that true religion and worship lie within. The Torah had been intended as a teaching tool, explaining trust and love to the Jewish people. Paulus calls this "God's power for salvation" because of the freedom from guilt that it brings.

This freedom and power come "for the Jew first." Historically, the message was sent through a Jewish person to Jewish people. After the advent of Paulus and after Peter's visions (Acts 9-10), the message was opened up to gentiles. But Paulus does not mean this alone. The phrase "for the Jew first and for the Greek" establishes an equality between the two groups, for God's message was directed at everyone.

The core of the good message is trust, and both Jews and gentiles are capable of such trust. He has not addressed (Jewish) lineage, circumcision, or ritual, but his first quotation indicates that salvation both begins and ends with trust -- not with ritual.

The quote comes from Hab 2:4. Contextually, that oracle (2:1-5) is concerned with living by trust in a world where others are faithless. God told Habakkuk to wait, for whoever does not live uprightly will fail, but the just one will live ... through his trust. The original application was probably contrasting the Hebrews with the Chaldeans, but the passage in general was written

more broadly -- as applying a general principle to a specific situation. Paulus extracts that principle -- trust leading to salvation -- and indicates that the passage would apply equally in any context, to Jews, to gentiles, or to mixed groups.

18 *For God's anger is revealed from heaven onto all the impiety and injustice of those people who hold down the truth with injustice. Because the knowledge of God is apparent among them, for God made it apparent to them.*

Here we see the author's clear understanding that the principle of life in trust is a general one. God's anger extends not to the Jewish people by lineage, nor to gentiles, but to anyone who lives in impiety and injustice. "Injustice" is wrong, and the term normally applied to someone who rejected what was in the Torah, but Paulus intends it to refer to the deeper truths that are the basis for the Torah. Who is "holding down the truth"? Anyone who rejects the spiritual Torah, which is the truth.

Paulus argues that God's anger extends to all such people, not just to Jews (who know the Torah), because God has made himself known and apparent (obvious) to everyone. How?

For his invisible qualities have been clearly seen, from the creation of the universe, being perceived in the things that were made--even both his everlasting power and divine nature--to the point of their being without excuse. Because, though they knew God, they did not glorify or thank him as God. On the contrary, they became worthless in their reasonings and their unintelligent hearts were darkened. Though they assumed themselves to be wise, they were foolish. And they traded the glory of the incorruptible God for a likeness of an image of corruptible humanity, and of birds, and of four footed animals, and of reptiles.

Although the readers will reckon that the words apply only to gentiles, Paulus has worded his statement so that with minor adjustments it might apply to Jewish people who reject the teachings of Jesus. His argument is as follows:

Anyone who rejects God's truth, becoming distrustful, will be judged. We know this because every attribute of God's is apparent in nature -- apart from the Torah. Therefore, those (gentiles) who want to profess ignorance of the Torah have no excuse. God revealed everything to them, even his everlasting power and his divine nature.

Therefore, these (gentiles) knew God, because God made himself known to them. If they didn't follow God, then, they were following their own moral choices. They were making bad decisions, knowingly, for which they would be judged. Instead of the spiritual good message, they had chosen to live in idolatry.

So, God gave them over in the strong desires of their hearts to uncleanness, for their bodies to be dishonored among them--those people who exchanged God's truth for the lie and who paid reverence and religious service to the creature, instead of the creator who is praised for the ages. A-mein.

God allowed them to make their moral decisions, and so these (gentiles) knowingly "exchanged God's truth for the lie." In the gentiles' case, Paulus means that their idolatry consisted of worshipping golden calves and the like. In the case of his Jewish kinsmen, the idolatry comprised their retention of ritualized religion, which had become idolatry for them, as they rejected the spiritual Torah that came through God's Anointed One. They insisted on performing physical religious service (a term that Paulus has applied to himself in a spiritual sense), instead of following God as he wants to be followed. Paulus has not yet applied this to Jewish people, but he is about to do so.

24 *On account of this, God handed them over into dishonorable emotion. For their females too changed the natural use into what is aside from nature. Similarly too, the males also put off the natural use of the female and were enflamed in their emotion for one another: males with males, working out what is unattractive and receiving in return that repayment (which was necessary) for their going astray among themselves.*

The passage relates the sexual sins of the gentiles, well known to Jewish people and in flagrant violation of the Torah. Although he may be implying that all rejection of God leads to something unnatural, he does not explicitly say this. The readers are expected to become aggravated at those impious gentiles who reject God. This aggravation will set them up for Paulus' next point.

Yes, Paulus is saying that homosexual activity is in violation of the Torah, is unnatural, represents dishonorable emotion, and is unattractive to God. This is not his point, however, so that anyone taking the position that Paulus is directly attacking homosexuality is wrong. The problem here is not homosexual activity, per se, but the rejection of God's teachings, which always lead to something bad. Paulus' example was conjured up so as to inflame the readers.

And just as they did not examine to have recognition of God, God gave them over to thoughtless minds to do the things that are unfit, being filled with every injustice, evil, greed, badness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice. They are gossips, slanderers, despisers of God, violent people, boasters, inventors of evil things, unpersuaded by their parents, unintelligent ones, bargain-breakers, people without familial affection, unmerciful ones. They knew God's tenet--that those who practice the things that they were practicing are worthy of death. Not only did they do these things, but also they delight in those who practice them.

What seems like a scathing attack on impious gentiles is again something that will soon find its parallel among the Judaizing community. What happened to those gentiles who rejected God's guidance? They wound up with every kind of problem imaginable as they went further away from God.

Paulus weaves into the discussion the basic concepts of the Ten Commandments. His point is simple: those who live without trust do not follow God's obvious teachings that are in the Torah. On the other hand, he will also say that those who live by trust do follow the teachings of the Torah, whether they read a written scroll or not.

The last two sentences have a more general application: that there are those who know what God wants and who not only intentionally do otherwise but invite others to do so as well. This application goes well beyond the limitations of lineage, and Paulus is about to say so.

2:1 So, you are inexcusable, O human being, all who are judging. For with whatever you judge the other person, you are condemning yourself! For you are practicing the same things you are judging! But we know that God's judgment is according to truth upon those who practice the same things. But are you considering this, O human being (you who are judging those who practice such things and who are doing the same things): that will you escape God's judgment? Or that you are despising the wealth of his gentleness and patience and longsuffering, being ignorant that God's gentleness leads you into mental change? But you are treasuring up anger for yourself, according to your hardness and your unchanged heart, in a day of anger and revelation of God's just judgment, when "he will give out to each one according to his deeds."

It is here that Paulus chooses to make his broader application. True, there are gentiles who rejected God's message and who wound up steeped in lives of sin, but those same Jews who currently judge those gentiles are involved in sins that are just as bad. Both the "godless" gentiles and the Jewish people who judge them are living faithless lives. Neither that Jew nor that gentile will escape their judgment.

Paulus refers to God's "gentleness" and "longsuffering." This is a typical theme among Jewish/Christian writers who point out God's anger. The normal usage relates to God's dealings with his people, and so it is certainly the Jewish people to whom the author addresses the main points of his reminder.

Thus, he refers to a day of judgment, citing the psalms (62:12). It is unclear yet whether the author intends to indicate each person's individual judgment before God or whether he means the impending judgment on Israel. The psalm places an emphasis on trust in God, which is Paulus' central point: "Trust in him at all times, people. Pour out your hearts before him. God is a refuge for us." (v. 8)

There is also another point lingering in Psalm 62 which Paulus is about to introduce in earnest: that of God's fairness or impartiality. V. 9 reads, "Men of low estate are but a breath; men of high estate are a delusion. In the balances they go up; together they are lighter than a breath." Both the esteemed and socially unimportant are equal before God because their situation means nothing to him. Paulus will introduce the equality of Jews and gentiles before God, and the Psalm helps set this up.

At the moment, if the judgment is the coming judgment on Israel, then God is about to reward those who follow their Messiah and "reward" (punish) those who rejected him.

Indeed, he will give out eternal life to those who according to the endurance of a good deed are seeking glory and honor and incorruptibility. But to those who act out of bigotry and who are unpersuaded by the truth but are persuaded by wrong, he will give out anger and rage: affliction and times of hardship upon every human soul who works out wrong, both to the Jew first and to

the Greek; but glory and honor and peace to all who work goodness, both to the Jew first and to the Greek. For there is no personal bias with God.

"The endurance of a good deed" refers to the ability to persevere while standing up for something right. In this case, the application is for those who stand up for the Anointed One and his teachings. They are seeking "glory, and honor, and incorruptibility." The corruptible thing (by comparison) is Priestly Judaism, which has been earmarked for destruction; on the other hand, internal Judaism (Christianity) is incorruptible, and those Christians who do not rely on legal codes but on trust are seeking that incorruptible, glorious thing.

Paulus saw bigotry in judging and rejecting people because of their race or lineage. Those legalists who demanded circumcision of the gentile converts (something Paulus mentions in detail later) were not only acting out of bigotry but were failing to adhere to "the truth." The Truth is the spiritual Torah, an internal code which is not bound to physical things like circumcision and the written code. The spiritual code both explains and fulfills the written one.

What will happen to those who choose to remain on the side of legalism? When Israel is judged (66-73 CE) their way of life was removed, leaving them with no access to God. "The affliction" is a common term used to refer to this period -- the one which Johannes uses, for instance. This affliction was coming for the Jew first, because physical Israel was being judged, but to any gentile also who sought access to Yahweh God through physical means. And so, just as the good message had gone out to the Jew first and then to the Greek, so also the judgment was coming upon the Jews first, but then to the Greeks.

The "glory, and honor, and peace" are not physical, for Jesus had not promised earthly glory, earthly honor, or earthly peace to his followers. In fact, he claimed to have brought not peace but the sword of division. However, God would provide the glory and honor, and the Messianic teachings would give the peace to those who followed them. Just as Paulus himself found contentment in all his circumstances, so also all of the readers could find similar spiritual peace if they remained with Jesus and did not degenerate into legalistic religion.

"There is no personal bias with God." What a statement! God treats all people equally, or even, "All men are created equal." Wow! Paulus has provided support for the idea that all those who live in sin -- those who reject God -- are equal in his sight, and all will be punished. More support will be needed, though, for what he is about to say, and so he continues....

12 *For as many as sinned without a code, these will also be destroyed without a code, and as many as sinned with a code, they will be judged through a code. For the it is not the hearers of a code who are just before God, but it is the doers of the code who will be justified.*

The general principle, says Paulus, behind the things that he has already written is simple: all who live in sin are judged. That means that both the Jewish sinner and gentile sinner will be judged according to their deeds. This is a weaker statement than "there is no personal bias with God," but the author has to establish that statement from various angles.

The readers have probably agreed that those gentiles who don't have the Torah will still face judgment. Why? Because they had access to God, even if they didn't have the Torah. The logical conclusion then is this: that having the Torah isn't related to justification before God. The gentiles who do not have the Torah are still liable because they were able to follow its principles. At least in that respect there is no personal bias. Jewish sinners are punished, and so are gentile sinners.

But Paulus turns that around to say that a spiritual Torah also determines who is justified. Having a written code is not so important; following its principles -- its teachings -- THAT'S the important thing.

For when those gentiles who have no code should do the things of the Torah by nature, since they do not have a code they are a code for themselves. They clearly show the work of the code written in their hearts, with their consciences testifying together with their hearts and the reasonings between one another accusing or even defending, during a day when God will judge the hidden things of human beings according to my good message, through Anointed Jesus.

How can the readers be sure that "good" gentiles are justified without the written Torah (or any Jewish ritual)? Because they are still able to follow the code "written in their hearts." The readers will recognize the allusion to Jeremiah 31:33, *"I will put my code within them, and I will write it upon their hearts."* It had always been God's intent to set up an **internal** code, not a physical and written one. In the Messianic covenant, this was certainly the case. Even if the readers did not believe that it had always been that way -- that pious gentiles were justified before God -- they had to agree that God was going to establish a spiritual Torah with the new covenant -- the covenant under which they were now living.

Knowing that all good things come from God, the readers are asked to honestly examine "good" gentiles. "They clearly show" that they are following God, just as Aesop (and Jesus) had said that a tree is known by its fruits. Building support with the notion of the testimony of two witnesses, Paulus indicates that the (clear) consciences of "good" gentiles testify together with their hearts. Their reasonings might accuse them, but (if they are indeed good) those reasonings might even defend them before God. When the judgment comes on physical religion, their way of thinking would still remain. And the then-coming judgment on Israel would be based on the good message that Paulus was spreading -- the internalization of the Torah as taught by the Anointed One, Jesus.

But if you are called by name a "Jew", and if you rest on a code and boast in God, and if you know the wishes and examine the things that make sense, since you are instructed from the Torah, if you are also persuaded that you yourself are a road-guide to blind people (a light to those who are in darkness, a trainer of simple people, a teacher of babies, having the form of knowledge and the truth in the Torah)--the one, then who is teaching another--you aren't teaching yourself! The one who is heralding not to steal is stealing. The one who says not to commit adultery is committing adultery. The one who detests the idols is robbing the temple. You who are boasting in a code, you are dishonoring God in the transgression of the Torah. For "God's name is being spoken evil of among the gentiles on account of you," just as it was written.

Next, Paulus turns to the history that his people had of turning away from God. If the Jewish people were so great because they were enlightening the gentiles with the teachings of the Torah, then how much worse were they for doing the things that they taught the gentiles not to do? He says that if indeed they really were "guides to the blind," then they hadn't taught THEMSELVES anything.

Were they enlightening those in darkness (as a "light to the nations")? Not if they failed to practice the Torah that they taught. Were they teaching the "baby" gentiles who had no such code? Not if they didn't follow what teachings they had. And historically, Israel did do the things that Paulus charges them with. No, the Judaizing group probably did not steal, commit adultery, and rob the temple, but the writings of the prophets indicate that despite their possession of the Torah, representatives of the Jewish people did do those things.

Therefore, if the Judaizers claimed that merely possessing the Torah made them somehow superior to gentiles -- so that they could order the gentile Christians to become like them -- then they were mistaken. "You who are boasting in a code, you are dishonoring God...." How could they boast that legalism is superior, since the possession of the Torah and legalistic religion had not helped their people in the past?

Paulus likens the Judaizers to the Israel of Isaiah's day. Then, the unclean and uncircumcised had overrun the holy city; to Paulus, the legalistic view of religious ritual and a physical Torah was equally unspiritual. So just as God (through Isaiah) calls his people to rise up out of the mire that they were in and to listen to the good message (Isa 52:1-7f.), Paulus calls his own people of the same racial stock to listen to the good message that the Anointed One had given him. For on account of legalistic hypocrisy the gentiles were speaking badly of them, just as similar gentiles had done so in Isaiah's time (52:5).

25 For circumcision indeed profits, if you practice a code, but if you should be a transgressor of the code, your circumcision has become a foreskin. Therefore, if the foreskinned should guard the tenets of the Torah, isn't his foreskin considered as circumcision? And the one who is foreskinned from nature and who completes the Torah will judge you, who through writing and circumcision are a transgressor of a code. For the one who is a Jew in appearance is not a Jew, neither is that which is circumcision in physical appearance circumcision. On the contrary, the one who is a Jew in the hidden place is a Jew, and circumcision is spiritual circumcision of the heart--not literal. This one's praise is not from people but from God.

The next question that Paulus anticipates is something akin to, "Then why have our people bothered getting circumcised all these years?" The answer was not very palatable. The Jewish people had an advantage in having been given greater knowledge, but if they rejected that greater knowledge, then they had forsaken their covenant -- the covenant of circumcision. It was as though their circumcision had been (medically) undone. Naturally, Paulus intends this metaphorically.

On the other hand, he continues, isn't it logically the case also that the pious gentile -- the one who keeps the internal principles of the Torah -- is similarly treated? Isn't it just as though he had been circumcised (and a part of Judaism)?

This was a tough point to make, and so Paulus supports his case by citing a passage with which they would be familiar -- a passage that directly indicates that the **true** circumcision is "of the heart." This citation was from the very Torah itself (Dt 10:16): "therefore, circumcise the foreskins of your hearts, and do not be stubborn any longer." That same passage indicates that God had chosen his people. Yet although they were marked with physical circumcision, the true circumcision was "of the heart" -- exactly as Paulus had claimed. Physical circumcision meant something, then, because it indicated that God had given them the teachings of life. But it meant nothing without fearing God, loving and serving him, and keeping his precepts with **heart** and **soul** (Dt 10:12). The passage also contains a reference to God's impartiality (v. 16), which Paulus clearly had in mind.

Therefore, true Judaism is and has always been a spiritual concept. Physical circumcision was to be a sign of spiritual dedication to God. Then it had never been the physical sign that was important but the trust in and devotion to Yahweh God.

3:1 Therefore, what is the Jew's abundance? Or what is the profit to circumcision? Much in every way! For first indeed, because they were entrusted with God's oracles. So what? If some did not trust, did their distrust did nullify God's trustworthy nature? Let it not happen!

The author anticipates an argument from his readers' opponents. If true "Jewishness" was always spiritual rather than physical, then what benefit was there to being a Jew? Why did they bother being circumcised? Paulus' answer is simple and connects directly to the notion of the Jewish people as God's chosen nation. The Jews were special because they had been chosen to carry God's oracles. Among all the nations, God had spoken to them, giving them the Torah and guiding them via the Prophets to better instruction. The fact that some of them did not trust in God certainly didn't erase their "chosen" standing, for God had made certain promises to them, and he remained trustworthy.

But let God become true, but every person a liar, just as it was written, "so that you might be justified in your words and have victory in your judgment." Now if our wrong establishes God's right, what will we say? Is God, who brings forth anger, wrong? (I am speaking like a human being.)

In case they might reason that God's truth is somehow better or more clear **because** his people wandered away from him, Paulus addresses that immediately. Quoting Psalm 51 -- the Davidic psalm which is a plea for forgiveness -- Paulus points out that God is justified in what he says and in the judgment that he passes. This comes following the psalmist's acknowledgement that, "I have sinned against you -- you alone -- and I have done what is evil in your sight." (Psa 51:4) Israel's wanderings were opposed to God, and God was justified in having chastised them.

Is God wrong? Indeed that sort of reasoning isn't divine but "human," earthly. The readers should be beyond such reasoning.

Let it not happen! Otherwise, how will God judge creation?! But if God's truth was made abundant by my lying to the point of his glory, for what am I still judged as a sinner? And (just

like we are spoken evil of and just as some affirm us as saying), should we do bad so that good might come? Their judgment is just.

But we know that God is the judge of all creation. As creator, he alone is entitled (by nature) to judge. Consequently the idea that the creator can be unjust is ridiculous. Whatever he decrees is just.

Still, what if the Judaizers continue to argue that "God's truth was made abundant" by sin? That sin somehow glorifies God? Then Paulus counterargues, "Should we do bad?" For that argument is the same as saying that "rules are made to be broken," and Paulus rejects such a notion, and even the gentiles condemn such a ridiculous idea, justly.

9 So what? Are we ahead of them? Not at all! For we gave reason earlier that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin, just as it was written that, "There is no just person; not even one. There isn't anyone who understands. There isn't anyone who seeks out God. All have bowed out; they became needless together. There isn't anyone who does gentleness; there is not even one."

"Their throats are open graves; they have been deceiving with their tongues."

"Asps' poison is under their lips."

"Their mouths are filled with cursing and bitterness."

"Their feet are swift to pour out blood; ruin and misery are in their ways, and they have not known the way of peace."

"There is no fear of God before their eyes."

"We" are the Jewish people; "they" are the gentiles. Are the Jews somehow better people by nature (because they were given the Torah)? No, all people are just human beings. All are fallable, and Paulus has already reckoned that both gentiles and Jews have sinned.

To support his case that the Jewish people are just as prone to sin as gentiles, the author rattles off a number of citations from their own history:

- Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 begin with, "The fool says in his heart that there is no God." The psalms are quite similar and contain the notions found in Paulus' first quote. Psalm 14:2/53:2 is particularly telling: "God looks down from heaven upon the sons of human beings to see if there are any that are wise, any that seek God." In his examination, God looks over both Jews and gentiles and finds none who are justified. In this, then, both gentiles and Jews alike were found to be sinners.
- Psalm 5 laments about all of the evildoers. In this case, those wrongdoers were Jewish, and "there is no truth in their mouths" (v. 9).
- David's personal enemies show up again in Psalm 140, where they "plan evil things" (v. 2) against God's chosen one. David pleads for God to intervene and vindicate him.
- Psalms 9 and 10 are a single Davidic lament in the manuscripts of the Septuagint and possibly in the Hebrew of Paulus' day. Those same Jewish enemies are rebuked for their stubbornness (v. 6), and David's voice says, "Why does the wicked person renounce God and say in his heart, 'You will not call to account?'" (v. 13) Hence, it is a wicked notion to suppose that God will not judge Jewish wrongdoers.

- Turning to Isaiah (59:7-8), Paulus cites the prophet's call to Israel for mental change. The longer passage contains an admonition that physical actions are unimportant unless the attitude is worshipful (58:3-7), and that true regard for God did not consist in rituals. These Jews had been following the rituals of the Torah but not its principles.
- Paulus concludes with Psalm 36:1. The wicked person does not fear judgment but believes that "his iniquity cannot be found out and hated" (v. 2).

Therefore, arguments that God will not punish Jewish people because their sins point out God's glory are rejected soundly. The psalms and prophets indicate otherwise -- that only a fool believes that God will not judge him if he behaves wickedly.

19 Now we know that whatever the Torah says, it is speaking to those who are under the code, so that every mouth would be closed and so that all the creation would become liable to God. And so, all flesh will not be justified in his presence out of works of a code, for recognition of sin comes through a code.

Well maybe those harsh things were written for gentiles only, even if the context seems to indicate otherwise? That argument is ridiculous too, as Paulus indicates. Not only is the context both clear and known to the Judaizers, but also the whole Torah is written for the covenanted people; they are bound to it.

This should silence "every mouth" and demonstrate that "all the creation" is liable to God. But everyone who wants to be justified through a code such as the Torah will be found unjustified. Why? Because the purpose of the Torah was not to provide justification but to point out sin.

With a code such as the Torah, the Jewish people became better able to recognize sin, but the Torah did not provide true justification. That always came through trust, which Paulus now must demonstrate.

It is Trust that Justifies

21 But now, without a code, God's ethics have been made to appear, being testified to by the Torah and the Prophets. But God's ethics are through Anointed Jesus' trust, for all who trust. For there is no distinction, for all sinned, and they fall short of God's glory, being justified as a gift by his generosity, through that redemption that is in Anointed Jesus.

"God's ethics" are his own moral quality or nature, his characteristics, for it is the characteristics of God which define what is good. These have been revealed through the Messiah's trust, and this revelation has come for everyone who might trust -- not just for the Jewish people.

Why not just for Jews? Because when trying to live by a code such as the Torah, both Jews and gentiles alike have been found to be sinners. None of them are perfect; none have achieved God's glory. Fortunately, justification doesn't come through such a code: God's spiritual children are justified by God's generosity. He looks at us and sees only that we trust in him; our misdeeds are ignored.

The Anointed One brought redemption because he completed and spiritualized a system that pointed out sin. The Torah was intended to teach about God's perfection, but if people did not see its spiritual intent and tried to live perfect lives, this was essentially a near-impossible task. Every misdeed was like a debt, and so when Jesus died, his completion of the Jewish system symbolically bought people back (redeemed them) from their debts, showing them how to live without guilt.

God set him out to be an atoning sacrifice with his blood, through trust, for a pointing out of his ethics by the sending away of those sins that were done earlier during God's period of endurance--so that in the present season there would be a pointing out of his ethics, for him to be just, as also he is justifying the one who is of Jesus' faith.

The atoning sacrifice of Jesus was just like the sacrifices of the first covenant: it too was a teaching tool. The intent was not to **provide** forgiveness, and neither did the earlier sacrifices actually provide it. Instead, both the sacrificial system and the Messiah's death pointed to the forgiving characteristics of God. When the sacrificial system was completed, the guilt brought on by that legalism was metaphorically removed, and there is now no need for such guilty feelings. God is revealed as a just judge, not ever having intended for people to follow a nearly impossible code. Instead, that code is revealed by the Messiah as having been a teaching device that was intended to indicate God's nature to human beings.

And so, the Christian -- the one who belongs to Jesus' faith -- can see those godly attributes without the constant reminder of sin that the sacrificial system brought.

27 Therefore, where is the boasting? It has been shut out. Through what sort of code? One of deeds? No. On the contrary, through a code of trust. For we are considering a person to be justified by trust, without deeds of a code. Or is he the God of the Jews alone? No, he is also the God of the gentiles...yes, also of gentiles, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised through trust and the foreskinned through trust. Therefore, are we deactivating the Torah through trust? Let it not happen! On the contrary, we are establishing the Torah.

Then can the Jewish person boast in merely being Jewish? No, for all people are equal before God. Can they boast in keeping a code that they don't keep? Of course not. What was it that revealed this lack of distinction -- this equality among people? It wasn't a code of actions (the Torah) but a spiritual code -- a code of trust. The true Torah, the true instruction, was deeper than a set of rituals, sacrifices, dos, and don'ts. The true spiritual Torah was always internal -- a "code of trust."

Consequently, Paulus recognizes that everyone -- both Jew and gentile -- is now and always has been judged according to trust and justified according to trust. Those who are justified in God's presence do not lead "perfect lives" but are regarded as though they were perfect because God's own generosity ignores the misdeeds of the person who strives to live by trust. This clearly extends to everyone because there is only one true god -- who is therefore the god of both Jews and gentiles.

Has the Torah been deactivated -- robbed of its power? No. If regarded properly, as a teaching tool, then the Torah is **established** by the deeper code of trust. The Torah teaches right and wrong, so that people might better understand God's nature and wishes. What it does not do is justify a person -- that is done through trust (by Yahweh's generosity).

*4:1 Therefore, what will we say that Abraham (our forefather according to the flesh) has found? For if Abraham was made right from his deeds, he has something to boast about...but it is not directed toward God. For what does the writing say? "Now Abraham trusted God, and it was recorded to him as justification." Now the reward to the one who works is not recorded by generosity but by debt. But to the one who does not work but who trusts in the one who justifies the impious, his trust is recorded as justification. Just as also David says about the blessedness of the person to whom God records justification without deeds:
"Blessed are the ones whose lawless deeds are forgiven and whose sins are covered over.
Blessed is a man to whom Yahweh will by no means record sin."*

Continuing to demonstrate that people have ALWAYS been justified by trust and not by keeping the Torah, Paulus returns to the period before there was a written code. Abraham, forefather of all Jewish people, was never justified by his deeds. If he HAD been, that would have been something! But that's not what the Torah says. The Torah (Gen 15:6) says clearly that Abraham's justification came not through his deeds but through his trust in God.

The passage begins (15:1) with Abram's insecurity about being able to father children. Yahweh God urged Abram to trust him, promising that Abram's descendants would be numerous. Abram realized that God would faithfully keep his promise. This trust, and not anything Abram **did**, justified Abram for his previous doubt.

Paulus then reasons that if someone works his way into a reward of some kind, then he is OWED the reward. This isn't what happened to Abram, and it's not how we are justified in general. For Abram (and everyone) trust is recorded as justification. Paulus takes the statement in Genesis as the general identification of how God justifies people. He backs this up by citing Psalm 32:1-2, which refers not to "sinless people" but to people who have no sin RECORDED to them. David had sinned, and God had forgiven him (v. 5), although he had not provided any acts of atonement, and David praises those who never have sin recorded to them. This is indeed blessed.

His reasoning is that if that blessed person had been reckoning his life according to a moral code (the Torah), then he would not have been perfect. But God records no sin for such a person because his TRUST is counted as justification.

9 Therefore, is this blessedness on the circumcised, or also on the foreskinned? For we say, "The trust was recorded to Abraham as justification." How then was it recorded? When he was in circumcision or foreskinned? Not in circumcision but foreskinned! And he received a sign of circumcision, a seal of that justification by trust which he had while foreskinned, for him to be a father of all those who trust while foreskinned, for the justification to be recorded to them also. And for him to be a father of circumcision not only to those who are of circumcision but also to those who are stepping in the footsteps of the trust of our ancestor Abraham, which he had while foreskinned.

In order to bring gentiles back into the discussion of justification through trust, Paulus points out something amazing -- something that probably had not occurred to his readers or to the Judaizers. When was it (in Abraham's life) that his trust was counted as justification? BEFORE he entered the covenant of circumcision. Abraham had been just like a gentile, then, and circumcision became a SIGN of his relationship with God -- a relationship that already existed before he was circumcised. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant, but the justification by trust came before and overshadowed the covenant.

By analogy, those who trust God as Abraham did, even though they are gentiles, follow in Abraham's footsteps and are justified by their trust.

For the promise to Abraham (or to his seed) for him to be an inheritor of creation was not through a code but through justification by trust. For if those who are from a code are heirs, the trust is made worthless and the promise is nullified. For the Torah works out anger. But where there is no code, neither is there transgression.

Is it still possible that the promise made to Abraham's descendants was connected to keeping the Torah (as a legal code, not as a spiritual teaching tool)? No, this is impossible, for the promise was made to Abraham on account of trust, not deeds or a code. There would be no point in trusting at all if keeping a code could merit the promises. Anyway, the Torah only points out what is right and wrong; without a code, there would be no transgression of a code and no anger. That is, having the code only INCREASED the responsibility of the Jewish people; it did not justify and therefore nullify the sort of trust that justified Abraham.

On account of this, it is from trust (so that it is according to generosity), for the promise to be sure for all the seed--not those who are from the Torah alone, but also those who are from the trust of Abraham, who is a father of all of us--just as it was written that, "I have placed you to be a father of many nations." This happened next to that God whom he trusted, who makes the dead come alive and who calls the things that are not as though they are.

Well then, if God's generosity looks at human trust and justifies, then the promises are for all who trust -- not just for his physical descendants. Abram became the father not of one physical nation but of "many nations" (Gen 17:4). These many nations are his descendants not physically but in following in the footsteps of Abram's trust. Those people did not exist when God made that promise, but the same God who can resurrect (Sarah's dead womb, the Messiah) also looks ahead to his plans and pronounces them true, even if they are not true yet. God had spoken in the past tense about having set Abraham up to be a father of many nations, yet no child had even been conceived...yet. There is certainty in a promise from God.

18 *Beside hope, Abraham trusted with hope that he would become a father of many nations, according to what was said, "It is to be this way for his seed."*

Abraham's trust was "beside hope;" that is, it went beyond ordinary expectations. Abraham unrealistically, yet rightfully, believed that God would make his descendants numerous -- "many nations."

And without being weakened in trust (although thinking that his body was already deadened, being about one hundred, and thinking about the deadness of Sarah's womb), now he did not pass judgment (in disbelief) against God's promise. On the contrary, he was empowered in trust, giving glory to God and being fully mindful that he is also able to do what was promised. So also, it was recorded to him as justification.

This section indicates that Abraham was not overlooking the facts in his case. He fully realized that both he and his wife were now incapable of having a child together, and yet he still believed God. He believed God over and above his expectations and beyond any reasonable prediction. Yet instead of doubting, his trust was empowered. Instead of thinking the matter impossible or ridiculous, he realized that God could do anything -- including fulfill this promise. Such trust beyond expectation was the kind that had been "recorded to him as justification."

But it was not written on account of Abraham alone that, "It was recorded to him." On the contrary, it is also on our account, to whom it is about to be recorded: to those who trust in the one who was raised from among the dead, Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up on account of our wanderings and raised up on account of our justification.

Although God's promise had been made only in the presence of the ancestors, the promise was written down in the Torah for the benefit of future generations. Specifically, those who now trust that God can raise the dead -- and did resurrect the dead Messiah -- have the same sort of justification by trust that Abraham had.

5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified by trust, we have peace toward God through our Lord, Anointed Jesus. Through him also, we have an introduction by trust into this generosity in which we stand, and we have been boasting about the hope of God's glory. Now, not only this, but also we have been boasting in the afflictions, since we know that the affliction is working out endurance. Now the endurance is working out proof; the proof is working out hope. Now the hope is not disgraced, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts, through that holy breath that was given to us.*

Under a legal code and with a sense of legalism, there is internal conflict, but Jesus brought internal peace with the recognition that justification comes through trust. After so many generations, God's people have been made to realize the wonderful generosity of God -- that is, they have been "introduced" to it.

The envoys, who have been traveling around the land heralding the Messiah and the internal Torah, have been boasting about two things: the hope that they now have in God's glory -- since they realize that justification comes through trust -- and their own physical afflictions which they have been suffering at the hands of their Jewish countrymen.

Why boast in persecution? Their affliction makes them able to endure more, and their ability to endure proclaims the truth of the things that they are teaching. Finally, a deeper realization of the truth of their teachings (which came from God) only serve to strengthen their hope in God. The center of the spiritual Torah is love, and the envoys know that God's love is theirs, their trust

being made strong by the holy breath -- the miraculous signs that confirm the truth of the message and therefore their hope.

For while we were still without strength, according to that season, an Anointed One died on behalf of impious people. For scarcely would someone die on behalf of a just person. For on behalf of a good person, someone might possibly even dare to die. But God establishes his love for us, because while we were still sinners, an Anointed One died on our behalf. Therefore, since we have now been justified in his blood, by more rather we will be saved from the anger through him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, then after being reconciled we will be saved by more rather in his life. Now not only this, but also we boast in God through our Lord Anointed Jesus, through whom we now have received reconciliation.

At one time, the envoys had no such miraculous power. In fact, they lacked power of any kind on their own, and Paulus was certainly focusing on himself in this passage. But it was then, when they were powerless, that the Messiah died for them -- the pious for the impious. How amazing this was that none of them deserved such an act on Jesus' part, but he died for them!

Why, most people wouldn't even die for a person who is ALREADY just, but Jesus died for them. A few people might DARE to die for a good person, but Jesus had died for them. Therefore, God had proven to the envoys that he loved them, by sending the Messiah to die for them while they were still ordinary sinners -- just like the Roman Christians.

Knowing this, the envoys' trust is made even stronger, for now they have become certain that the coming anger -- the judgment on Israel -- will not happen to them. Incidentally, time proved Paulus right, for he died prior to the destruction of the temple, as did at least most of the envoys.

Paulus was indeed an "enemy" at the time of Jesus' death. How much more now does he realize God's love for him?! It is no wonder, then, that the envoys boast in God "through Jesus" -- on account of the great explanation of God's generosity that did not come until Jesus willingly sacrificed himself. Then, the twelve were powerless, but now they are fully reconciled to God. There is no "gap," no "wall" between them and God, because their consciences are fully clear, and they are free.

12 *On this account, just as through one person sin entered into creation, and death entered through sin, in this way also death came through to all people (i.e., all sinned). For until the Torah, sin was in creation, but is sin recorded when there is no code? On the contrary, death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who did not sin with the likeness of the wandering of Adam, who is a type of the one who was about to come.*

How then are both sin and redemption universal? We might think that Eve was the "one person" through whom sin came, but Paulus blames Adam. It had been Adam who was first charged with keeping the teaching from God, and so it was Adam who was responsible for not warning his wife about the wrong things that they were about to do. Adam brought spiritual death, because after Adam, all kinds of people (Jew and gentile, who are equally Adam's descendants) followed him into sin.

Just as the uncovenanted gentiles had and have access to God without a code, those who lived between Adam and the coming of Moses knew enough to trust God. But "death reigned" because many of them rejected God, even without the Torah to point him out to them more clearly. Their lesser knowledge gave them lesser responsibility, but they did not maintain it properly.

But the free gift is not just like the wandering. For if the many died by the wandering of one, rather more is God's generosity and gift in favor made abundant for the many by the one person, Anointed Jesus. And the gift is not like what happened through the one who sinned. For indeed, the judgment from one wandering was for condemnation, but the free gift from many wanderings is for justification. For if, by the wandering of one, death reigned through the one, then those who have received the abundance of generosity and the gift of justification will rather more reign through the one, Anointed Jesus.

Paulus sees several ways in which Jesus was the "Second Adam." The many who rejected God after Adam followed in his path of sin, and the many who accept the internal Torah through Jesus will follow in his path of justification -- accepting God's generous gift of life.

But the gift is not something that we earn, despite the fact that sinners earn their condemnation. It is a free gift, forgiving many wanderings, whereas Adam was condemned and expelled from the garden for his single wandering.

Remember that "death's reign" refers to the many people rejecting God. Paulus envisions even more people embracing God now that the truth of the internal Torah has become known, so that God's generosity will be even more abundant, and justification will reign.

For indeed, as through one wandering there was condemnation for all people, in the same way also through one right deed there is justification for all people. For just as through the failure of one person to hear, the many were set down as sinners, in the same way also through the listening of one person, the many are set down as just people. Now a code came in, so that the wandering would multiply, but where sin was multiplied, generosity superabounded, so that just as sin reigned with death, so also generosity would reign through justification into eternal life through Anointed Jesus our Lord.

Some people stumble over this section, thinking that Adam's sin somehow tainted all mankind. Yet Paulus no more intended to say that than he intended to say that since Jesus came all humanity is justified. Instead, both Adam and Jesus "opened doors." Adam paved the way for others to reject God and be condemned, but Jesus showed the more excellent path -- the spiritual code of trust and love which leads to justification. Because Adam had failed to listen to God, he wound up opening the door for others to sin. Likewise, because Jesus did listen to God, he opened the door for others to accept God's instruction.

The code that came in was the Torah, and it was necessary. It pointed out many more things that were godly and ungodly, in the process causing many to realize their wanderings. But God was always justifying by trust, and so his generosity was more abundant than the wanderings of the Jewish people. Sin and death reigned as the people became able to identify many sinful acts, for

the Torah pointed them out. But God's generosity reigns with justification, now that the true spiritual character and meaning of the Torah have become known.

The Superiority of an Internal Code

6:1 Therefore, what shall we say? Should we continue with sin, so that generosity would multiply? Let it not happen! How would we, who have died to sin, live in it still? Or are you ignorant of the fact that as many as were baptized into Anointed Jesus were baptized into his death?

Paulus returns to a point made earlier. If God forgives all the more, should people then sin? Does that somehow glorify God? His case before had been that God judges those who think so foolishly. To that argument, he adds the point that the new covenant sets Christians apart from the whole sinful way of life. Sin and death once reigned, but now that the Messiah has come, those things have no power -- they are dead, and so we are dead to sin. By no means can we go on sinning -- unless we are entirely ignorant.

Christian baptism was a sign of distinction between Messianic Jews/gentiles and those Jewish people who did not accept Jesus as the Anointed One. The action signified an entry into the New Covenant, which had been inaugurated at the time of Jesus' death. Paulus uses the phrase "baptized into" which refers exclusively to covenant. The covenant with Jesus was a covenant with his death. The point of bringing this up will soon be clear.

Therefore, we were buried together with him through baptism into the death, so that just as the Anointed One was raised up from among the dead (through the Father's glory), in the same way also we should walk in newness of life. For if we have become planted together as a likeness of his death, we will also certainly be in the likeness of the resurrection: knowing this, that our former person was crucified with him, so that the body of sin would be nullified, for us to be enslaved no longer to sin. For the one who has died has been justified from sin.

Paulus does NOT mean that baptism "looks like a burial." On the contrary, he is simply extending the "death" analogy. If we have entered Jesus' death, then the public act of separating from legalistic Judaism and uniting with the Messiah is like a burial -- it is what happens after we die. But just as Jesus was resurrected, the Christian must live a "resurrected" life. In Paulus' analogy, the covenant with Jesus' death is also a covenant with his resurrection. Consequently, no one may live in sin.

"Our former person was crucified with him" -- again a connection to Jesus' death. Jesus had been forcibly crucified, and the legalistic sinful nature of the Christian should be regarded as having been forcibly executed along with Jesus. The "body of sin" is analogous to the dead body of the executed sinful nature. It is in the grave, but we have been resurrected. Sin and death are powerless, and so the Christian is no longer sin's slave. The Christian is not so legalistic as to be enslaved to a code of actions, to a religion that provides reminders of sin. Instead, he should treat the former life as though it is "dead," for he "has been justified" and now need not live in guilt.

Now if we died with the Anointed One, we trust that we will also live together with him, knowing that the Anointed One, who was raised up from among the dead, dies no longer. Death is no longer his lord. For what death he died, he died to sin, once and for all; but the life he lives, he lives for God. In the same way also, you should consider yourselves dead indeed to sin but alive to God in Anointed Jesus.

Just as Abraham had looked ahead to God's promises, the readers are told to look ahead. Jesus died, so we died. Jesus was raised, so we should live resurrected lives and look ahead to the afterlife. Jesus now no longer dies, and so our life ahead is eternal. Jesus died to sin and lives forever for God. It should be the same way for the one who claims to follow Jesus.

12 *Therefore, sin should not reign in your mortal bodies to the point of listening to their strong desires. Neither should you present your members to sin, as weapons of wrong. For sin will not be your lord, for you are not under a code but under generosity.*

So, no argument can be made in favor of continuing to sin. The Christian must live a resurrected life, and only an ignorant person would continue in sin after having died to sin. But when Paulus talks about one's members being "weapons of wrong," he is not referring to the sins themselves but to the control that legalism gives sin over a person. Therefore, he reinforces this idea by reminding them that "you are not under a code" -- a reminder of sin -- but "under generosity," which removes the guilt. The Judaizers were attempting to bring back that legalism and restore the guilt.

What then? Should we sin, because we are not under a code but under generosity? Let it not happen! Don't you know that you who listen are slaves to the one to whom you present yourselves as slaves (to the point of listening), whether this is to sin (to the point of death) or to listening (to the point of justification)?

In case someone says that there is no record of sin without a code, therefore, let's sin, Paulus reminds the readers that anyone is a slave to the one to whom he listens. If someone listens to sin, he is still a slave to sin, but if someone listens to God, he should avoid sin. Listening to sin results in death, but listening to God results in justification.

But thanks to God that you were slaves to sin but you listened from the heart to that type of teaching into which you were delivered. Now having been freed from sin, you were enslaved to what is right.

"Religion" -- rituals and legalism -- brings about slavery to sin, but Paulus is thankful that his readers did not hear about the Messiah that way. They had correctly been taught that the Anointed One brought justification through trust, on account of God's generosity. The readers are urged to embrace that generosity, and the freedom from guilt that accompanies it, and to remain enslaved to what is right -- to justification.

19 *I am speaking humanly, on account of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members to be slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness to the point of being in lawlessness, so now present your members to be slaves to what is right to the point of being made holy. For*

when you were slaves to sin, you were free from what is right. Therefore, what fruit did you have then (which you are now ashamed of)? For the end of these things is death. But now, after being freed from sin but having been enslaved to God, you have your fruit to the point of being made holy. Now the end of this is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but God's free gift is eternal life in Anointed Jesus our Lord.

When the Jewish Christians in Rome were under the Torah, they had been slaves to sin. Their legalism had brought them to the point of lawlessness, and they were unable to keep themselves clean in all of their law-keeping. They had been free from what is right, free from justification. That is, they were unjustified and were headed for death.

"But now," since they came to realize that God's true Torah was a spiritual precept, they are free from sin and have justification, slaves not to sin, law, and death, but to God. Now indeed they have eternal life.

"The wages of sin" -- Anyone who wants to live by the legal code must be punished for his misdeeds according to that code. Ultimately, this results in spiritual death. But God freely GIVES eternal life through the teachings of Jesus the Messiah. A life of trust and love results in justification from God and a free gift of eternal life. Who can beat that?

7:1 *Or are you ignorant, brothers? (For I am speaking to those who know the Torah.) Are you ignorant that the Torah is lord over a person for as long a time as he lives? For the woman who is joined to a man is bound by a code to the living husband. But if the husband should die, she is released from the husband's code. So therefore, while the husband lives, she will be divinely warned as an adulteress if she should become another man's. But if the husband should die, she is free from the code, to the point of her not being an adulteress when she becomes another man's.*

Since the Torah brings a recognition and consciousness of sin, Paulus has been claiming that judging people by a code of actions results in death. To support this claim, he first reasons with the Jewish Christians from the Torah about the Torah. They knew that God did not allow remarriage unless one's spouse should die. For Paulus, this is analogous to having the Torah as lord. Just as a married person lives under the marital code, the Torah's slave is bound to live under its entire code as long as he lives. If one partner dies, the marital code is broken, and the Christian has now "died" to the legalism that bound him to the Torah.

And so my brothers, you also were put to death to the Torah, through the Anointed One's body, for you to become another's--the one who was raised up from among the dead--so that you would bear fruit for God. For when we were in the flesh, the passions of the sins which were through the Torah were working in our members to the point of bearing fruit for death. But now, since you have died, you have been worked out away from the Torah in which we were held, and so we would be enslaved in newness of spirit and not oldness of letter.

The Christian, who has died to the Torah, is free to "remarry". He is free to unite himself to Jesus. Having the Torah as lord means following a code of rituals and reminders of sin; having Jesus as lord means following the internalized Torah. Just as the widow would be free to have

children with another man, so also the Christian is free of the Torah, now able to have children ("bear fruit") for God, even though under the code they were "bearing fruit" for death. That is, their lives showed the results of their lifestyle, and now it will show the result of their new, liberated, lifestyle.

Now, the Christian is enslaved to a new spirit -- a changed attitude toward life -- instead of being bound to a written document that was intended as a teaching guideline.

7 Therefore, what will we say? Is the Torah sin? Let it not happen! On the contrary, I didn't know sin, except through a code. For I hadn't even known strong desire, except that the Torah said, "You will not strongly desire." But sin took an opportunity through the precept and worked out in me all strong desire. For without a code, sin is dead. Now I am was alive then without a code, but when the precept came sin lived again. Now I died, and that same precept that was for life was found by me for death.

Paulus' ultimate example of the "marital code" analogy comes from his own life. So that he would not be accused of ignoring or maligning the Torah itself, he praises it. For it is not the Torah itself, *per se*, that creates the "code of sin and death" but the legalism and ritualism that surround it in religion. Why, Paulus wouldn't have known what improper desires were had he not read it in the Torah!

For when sin took an opportunity through the precept, it deceived and killed me through it. And so the Torah is indeed holy, and the precept is holy and just and good. Therefore, has the good thing become death for me? Let it not happen! On the contrary, sin became death, so that it might appear, working out death for me through the good thing, so that sin would become (through the precept) excessively sinful.

What is the relationship between the Torah (a moral code) and sin? The Torah brought a recognition of sin. Recognition by itself is not bad, if it is used properly as a teaching tool, but there was a tendency to develop self-condemnation and guilty feelings. Walking around guilty all the time gave Paulus' sins power over him. Therefore, although "The Torah is indeed holy," the sin took control and "became death," even though the sin was using something good (the Torah) in order to create the self-condemnation.

14 For we know that the Torah is spiritual, but I am physical, having been sold under sin. For I don't know what I am working out, for I don't practice what I want to, but what I hate, this I do. But if what I don't want, this I am doing, I fully affirm the Torah: that it is a nice thing. But now I am no longer working it out; on the contrary, I am working out the sin that is dwelling in me.

The true purpose of the Torah was to teach certain spiritual concepts, but since Paulus was a physical, fallable, human being, he often interpreted the Torah as a legal code. This made him constantly conscious not of God's forgiveness but of every little thing he did wrong. Even at the time of writing, there was still a tendency to focus on sinful acts rather than on God's generosity. He was able to perceive the struggle within himself to let go of his mistakes and grow, but on the other hand to keep reminding himself what a horribly imperfect person he was. Thus, he was not

fully free of the sin, even though he was not committing it at the time. Every time he held on to those guilty feelings, the sin gained power over him.

For I know that no good thing dwells in me (that is, in my flesh). For the wanting to do good is lying beside me, but not the working out of the nice thing. For I do not do the good thing that I want, but what bad thing I don't want, this I practice. But if what I don't want, this I do, it is no longer I who am working it out, but the sin that is dwelling in me.

I find after all the code: in my wanting to do the nice thing, I find that the bad thing is lying beside me. For I have pleasure together with God's code (according to the inner person), but I see another code in my members, making war against my mind's code and capturing me in the Code of Sin which is in my members. I am a lamentable person! Who will rescue me from this body of death?!

The "flesh" is the physical nature, but more than that, it is that nature which rejects that which is spiritual. The Torah was spiritual, but Paulus' physical nature (flesh) interpreted it as a physical code -- against its intent. Whenever he did this, he found himself so consumed with guilt that he was unable to do the right thing and let go of the sin. Whenever trapped in this mindset of consciousness of sin, and when he viewed the Torah as a reminder of sin, Paulus viewed himself as being controlled by the sin that he was trying to forget: "it is no longer I who am working it out."

Therefore, the failure to see that the Torah was a spiritual teaching tool brought about "the bad thing" -- what we might call legalism...the mindset that the Torah was a code of actions, a reminder of sin. So, although the author could be happy to partly recognize that he could let go of the guilt and simply be happy following God, he was unable to purge himself of that guilt as long as he saw the Torah from his former perspective. This wrong attitude toward the Torah, which was so typical among those who were interpreting it physically in general, is what Paulus calls the Code of Sin. The two exclamations which conclude the paragraph represent precisely the attitude of looking at the Torah from an unspiritual perspective. If the Torah demands perfection, then look at all those things you have done which were less than perfect. Look at what a horrible wretch you are! With that sort of self-image, every sin controls you.

8:1 *But thanks to God through Anointed Jesus our Lord! Therefore, after all, I myself (indeed with the mind) am enslaved to God's code, but with the flesh I am enslaved to sin's code. Then, neither is there now any condemnation to those who are in Anointed Jesus. For the code of the spirit of life in Anointed Jesus has freed you from the code of sin and death.*

How is it possible to get rid of that self-condemning, guilty attitude that comes from seeing the Torah as a constant reminder of everything you have ever done wrong? That's the new way of thinking that Jesus brought. When the Messiah came, he explained the true purpose of the Torah. He explained that what God wants is not legalistic code-keeping but for us to strive our best to live lives of trust and love for God. Knowing that, we should feel happy in our relationships with God, and we should rejoice in being forgiven. Our mistakes are gone, for God sees them no more.

In Paulus' explanation, it is the mind which is able to recognize the difference between a learning tool and a legal code. With his mind, Paulus knows what the Torah really is and teaches. The unspiritual, physical nature (flesh) is what leads toward the "legal code" idea, but if he rejects those unspiritual ideas, he feels "no condemnation." Where did that condemnation come from? **From his own unspiritual human nature.** Relief from that self-condemnation comes from Jesus, who brought a completely different attitude: "the spirit of life." Jesus' way of thinking is the attitude of life, but the Code of Sin (legalism) is the attitude of death. Thanks to the explanations sent by God through Jesus, neither Paulus nor the Roman Christians need to have such an unfruitful attitude of self-condemnation. They can live their lives feeling forgiven, and so can we.

For there was an inability of the Torah, by which it was made weak through the flesh. After God sent his son in a likeness of sin's flesh (and he sent him concerning sin), he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the justification of the Torah would be fulfilled by us, by those who are not walking according to flesh but according to spirit.

What was the Torah "unable" to do? To remove guilt. Not that it really *couldn't* remove guilt, but the attitude of self-condemnation and reminder of sin made it impossible for the guilty feelings to go away. Jesus came just like us -- with a weak physical body, but he "condemned sin in the flesh." This is usually taken to mean that he refused to sin, even though he had a physical human nature to sin. It can also mean that he condemned the attitude called the "Code of Sin." Both were certainly true of Jesus. The result of Jesus' life was that his followers could see that although it was virtually impossible to fulfill the Torah as a legal code (i.e., while viewing it "according to flesh"), it is possible to fulfill the actual intent of the Torah, i.e., when viewing it spiritually. This is the distinction between "walking according to flesh" (legalistically) and walking according to spirit" -- recognizing the Torah as pointing to trust and love rather than to specific acts of wrongdoing.

For those who are according to flesh have their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to spirit have their minds on the things of the spirit. For the attitude of the flesh is death, but the attitude of the spirit is life and peace. Because the attitude of the flesh is enmity to God, for it is not submissive to God's code, for neither is it able to be. Now the ones who are fleshly are not able to please God.

The Judaizers wanted to bind the physical rituals of Judaism on all Christians. This would have compelled them to view the Torah as a set of physical rituals and sacrifices rather than as a spiritual teaching tool. They would have had their minds set not on the principles of trust and love but on the physical things, but people who are able to see the true nature of the Torah are able to put their minds not on those reminders of sin but on the more important spiritual matters.

Those who are unable to attain to the spiritual, following instead the attitude of the flesh, wind up spiritually dead, constantly self-condemning and unable to attain perfection. That attitude is the very opposite to the peaceful recognition of forgiveness that God wants us to have. By setting their minds only on the unimportant physical things, people who "are fleshly are not able to please God." This comes because God has always desired mercy and not sacrifice, faithfulness rather than offerings.

9 But you are not fleshly but spiritual, because God's spirit is dwelling in you. But if someone doesn't have the Anointed One's spirit, that person is not his. Now if the Anointed One is in you, the body is indeed dead on account of sin, but the spirit is life on account of justification. Now if the spirit of the one who raised up Jesus from among the dead is dwelling in you, the one who raised the Anointed One from among the dead will also make alive those mortal bodies of yours, through his spirit that is dwelling in you.

"You are not fleshly but spiritual" -- that is, the envoys have taught the Roman Christians the full explanation given by Jesus. They know the true nature of the Torah and should be completely free of the legalistic notions of the Judaizers. Why? Because God's spirit -- here, his attitude or way of thinking -- is with them.

Anyone who doesn't "have the Anointed One's spirit" -- that is, anyone who doesn't have the same attitude that he had toward the Torah -- that person "is not his." The only real followers of the Messiah are those who follow his core teachings. If the Judaizers presume to be Christians and legalists, then they are one but not the other.

Being a follower of Jesus does not mean that one becomes sinless, incapable of wrongdoing. By no means. But while the body is still "dead on account of sin," the attitude of forgiveness and loyalty toward God (in trust and love) brings life (inner peace). Why? "On account of justification" -- because it focuses on justification rather than guiltiness. Anyone who has this attitude will be "alive" spiritually because of that attitude -- the same positive attitude that Paulus recognizes in the Romans.

12 Then after all, brothers, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you are about to die. But if by the spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by God's spirit, these are God's sons. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery (into fear again); on the contrary, you received a spirit of sonship, by which we call out, "Abba, Father." The same spirit is testifying together with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, we are also heirs -- indeed, God's heirs, and heirs together with the Anointed One, if indeed we suffer together with him, so that we would be glorified together with him.

"We are not debtors to the flesh." -- While we owe everything to God for giving us the wonderful Torah, we owe nothing to that wrong way of interpreting the Torah, even if we inherited that way of thinking along with the Torah. We owe it nothing because it brings death.

The positive attitude taught by Jesus brings life, and all who follow God's own attitude are his sons (for sons take after their father). The attitude that Paulus has labeled "spiritual" is also the attitude that is like God's, and therefore it is the attitude of sonship. Rather than living in fear, those who reject legalism in favor of full, free lives confidently and lovingly call out to God their Father.

Therefore God's own attitude toward the Torah testified along with the same attitude in the Romans that they were indeed God's children, for they were following God. From here, Paulus connects the notion of sonship with the concept of being an heir, for in common law every

legitimate son was an heir. Those who have God's attitude become heirs of everything, just as the Messiah was heir to everything, but they must continue to follow Jesus in his sonship. Just as he was persecuted by his people for teaching a way of thinking toward the Torah that was regarded as foreign, so also the Roman Christians will suffer. Then they would also follow Jesus on to glorification by God.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of the present season aren't worthy toward the glory that is about to be revealed for us. For one may suppose about a created being that it is expecting the revelation of God's sons. For the created being is submissive to worthlessness (not willingly, but on account of the one who subjected it), on the hope that also the created being itself will be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of God's children. For we know that all the creation groans together and is in labor together up to now. And not only it, but [also those who] have the first fruit of the spirit: even we ourselves are groaning within ourselves as we wait for sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For we were saved by hope, but a hope that is seen is not a hope. For why does someone hope for what is seen? But if we are hoping for what is not seen, we are waiting through endurance.

The readers expect Paulus to anticipate the future for them. What will happen if they continue to resist the Judaizers? Temporarily, there will be "sufferings," at least of the kind of pressures that they were then experiencing, some of which were social, and some of which were physical punishments. But every living creature would seem to be awaiting the time when Priestly Judaism will cease to exist, and at that time the true spiritual children of God would be revealed.

Every creature is subject to worthlessness, to futility of effort, for God alone can provide freedom. At the destruction of the temple, every creature will look not at "the slavery of corruption" (i.e., the dying nature of the religion called Judaism) but at the **freedom** of the **glory** of God's children, who are children spiritually and not through physical lineage. Thus, the whole creation in Paulus' day could be viewed as a mother in labor, groaning and experiencing the pains of labor until the time when the child would be born -- when the children of God were revealed.

This revelation of sonship provides redemption for the suffering that they were enduring both socially and physically. At the time, it did not look like the Romans were going to march in and sieze Jerusalem, destroying the temple and the form of sacrifice and worship, and so the author describes this as a "hope." It is not a hope, he says, if it is something that can clearly be foreseen. But those who hope must hope for something unseen, while enduring the pressure and pain brought on them by their opponents.

Now in the same way also the spirit assists us with our weakness. For we don't know what to pray for (as it is necessary), but the same spirit overly appeals with unspoken groans. But the one who searches the hearts knows what is the attitude of the spirit, because it appeals according to God on behalf of holy people.

The "spirit," in Paulus' usage, is still the way of thinking that he has associated with freedom and life. Just as all creation is groaning in labor, the spiritual way of thinking provides assistance, although metaphorically (and so its "groans" for the destruction of the temple are "unspoken").

How does having this attitude "assist" the Christian? God sees into the hearts of people and realizes who are truly his children. God saw this way of thinking and provides help, as though the gospel message were pleading for help on their behalf.

28 *Now we know that God is working everything together for good, for those who love God, for those who by design are called ones. Because those whom he knew previously, he also marked out previously to be in conformity with his son's image, for him to be firstborn among many brothers. Now those whom he marked out previously, he also called those; and those whom he called, he also justified those. Now those whom he justified, he also glorified those.*

Now God does more than just "see" who his children are; he is not a passionless observer. When he views his children, he takes action, working "everything" toward whatever is best. This does not mean that he would prevent the Roman Christians from experiencing pain or hardship, for that might not be best overall. But Paulus wanted them to know that Yahweh God was active on their behalf.

"By design" they had been called. That is, it had always been part of God's plan to invite all spiritually-minded people (Jews and gentiles) into a covenant with him. In this way, God looked ahead (even from the first moment of creation), envisioning that people like the Roman Christians would come to know him. He knew that people would be receptive, and so he "called" or invited them. Naturally, those who lived spiritually and who were invited into the spiritual covenant were also justified by God, and so glorified in God's eyes. Soon, that glory was about to be revealed to creation.

Therefore, what will we say to these things? If God is on our behalf, who is against us? Indeed, he didn't spare his own son, but he delivered him up on our behalf. How will he not also freely give us who are with him all things? Who will bring accusation against God's chosen ones? God is the one who justifies! Who is the one who condemns? Anointed Jesus is the one who died, but rather he was raised up, who is also at God's right side, who is also appealing on our behalf! Who will separate us from the Anointed One's love? Will affliction, or times of hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

Paulus considers that his point was made: that God had planned for the Roman Christians, had invited them to join him, forgave their wrongdoing, and had glorified them. Since God himself was working on their behalf, what opposition could they possibly have? The Judaizers were nothing compared to God! Why, God had sent the Messiah to die for them! Surely he would continue to be so loving and caring toward them.

Since God himself was providing the justification (through trust), who could possibly condemn them? Could the Judaizers succeed in doing that, even though the resurrected Messiah was appealing to God (metaphorically) on their behalf? How did Jesus make this appeal? Not literally, but the spiritual attitude, Jesus' own way of thinking, was in them, and therefore they had proven themselves to be the followers of God's prophet and Anointed One, who had given himself over to die because he loved them. Nothing could separate them from that love, unless they chose to leave God. In particular, none of the hardships that they were experiencing -- nor

any more fierce troubles that they might be subjected to -- could separate them from their way of life and standing before God.

Thus it was written that:

"On your account we were put to death the whole day. We are considered as sheep for slaughter."

Paulus cites Psa 44:22. In the context, the verse indicates that God sees everything that goes on, and although his faithful children are suffering, he knows and provides help. "All this has come upon us, though we have not forgotten you, nor have we been false to your covenant." The psalm is a prayer for deliverance from the enemies of Israel, and our author applies it to spiritual Israel. Although there is suffering, it is for God, who sees the state of his followers and will rescue them.

But in all these things we are overly victorious through the one who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither messengers nor rulers, neither present things nor future things, nor powers, neither height nor depth, nor another created being is able to separate us from God's love which is in Anointed Jesus our Lord.

"In all these things" -- in the persecutions that both he and the Romans were facing because they would not yield to human religion -- Paulus and his readers were not just victorious but were "overly victorious." It certainly did not appear that they were winning against the Judaizers, but because of their trust in the teachings of Jesus (who had loved them to the point of death), they were winning. How? Because no group of people could remove them from their faith. They were protected in God's love through their adherence to the teachings of Jesus, and not even God's own messengers, or human rulers, or "powers" (which could mean human powers or superhuman entities) could separate them from God's love. Nothing that was happening at present, nor anything they might suffer in the future would separate them from God. No vast expanse, nor any other creature could accomplish such an impossible task, for their relationship with God was their own choice, and no one could take away that relationship -- a relationship which existed because they followed the teachings of Jesus that internalized the precepts of the Torah.

God's Work Among the Jews

9:1 I am telling the truth in the Anointed One; I am not lying. My conscience is testifying together with me in holy breath: that my sorrow and unceasing anguish are great in my heart. For I was wishing myself to be an accursed thing from the Anointed One on behalf of those brothers who are my race-members according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the sonship, and the glory, and the covenant, and the code-giving, and the religious service, and the promise, whose are the ancestors and from whom was the Anointed One, according to the flesh.

Paulus has gone so far to emphasize the equality of all people in God's presence that he may have given his readers the impression that he has turned his back on his own (Jewish) people. Maybe they mean nothing to him now. Perish the thought! He begins by providing legal testimony that what he is about to write is true. Next, he appeals to his own conscience as a

supporting witness (in the Jewish legal sense). Finally, he calls upon inspiration, for with holy breath he states that he truly does "anguish" over the people of Israel. In fact, he would rather make himself "accursed" if only he could see all of his people embrace the teachings of Jesus.

God had given the Jewish people everything: the promises; the Torah; the first covenant; the sacrificial system. He had brought the Anointed One through their lineage. Surely the fulfillment of the promises had been offered to them. If only so many of them were not rejecting his teachings!

God, who is over all things, is praiseworthy for the ages. A-men.

For God's part in fulfilling his promises and carrying out his plan, he is certainly praiseworthy, and Paulus lapses briefly into a doxology.

6 But it is not like God's message has fallen off. For it is not all those who are from Israel that are Israel. Neither are they children because they are Abraham's seed. On the contrary, "In Isaak your seed will be called." That is, the children of the flesh, these are not God's children. On the contrary, the children of the promise are considered as seed.

If the message of freedom from legalism had been offered to all Israel, has the message failed? No, because the message was offered to everyone, and the true Israel consists of those who can perceive and accept that message. Paulus supports his case by appealing to God's promise to Abraham that in Isaak, not through Ishmael, would his promise of numerous descendants be fulfilled.

How does he make this application? Ishmael had been Abraham's natural child, born from his and Sarah's initiative, through the body of his servant, Hagar (Gen 16:15). Ishmael was a son from Abraham's own lineage, and he was the firstborn in that respect, but he was not the son that God had promised. Paulus' midrash suggests that although physical Israel was revealed before spiritual Israel, God's true heirs were the children "of the promise". God's true children were not the physical descendants of Abraham but those who lived according to the teachings of the promised Messiah.

For this is the message of promise: "I will come according to this season, and there will be a son for Sarah."

God had promised to provide a son for Abraham through Sarah. In Paulus' analysis, those who follow Jesus' teachings are the true Israel -- the children according to God's promise.

Now not only this, but also when Rebekka had sex with one man, Isaak our ancestor--for they were not yet born, nor had they practiced anything good or bad--so that God's design by election might remain--not from deeds but from the one who is calling--it was said that: "The one who is superior will be enslaved to the inferior." Just as it was written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Now Paulus' point shifts slightly, anticipating an argument based on who might be "firstborn." Consequently, he points out that God has the right to declare anyone an heir, whether or not they were born first. In particular, he declared a preference for Jacob over Esau, even though Esau was the firstborn son. Thus, nothing physical ("not from deeds") could compare to God's selection of Jacob. In fact, God's love for Jacob was so strong that by comparison his love for Esau was like hatred.

And so, "the one who is superior," the older brother, became subservient to his younger brother, for God had the authority to decide against the usual rule of birthright. In the case of the gentiles, then, God had the authority to allow them into the new covenant although they were not physically Jews. True birthright is established by God.

14 Therefore, what will we say? Is there injustice with God? Let it not happen! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy, and I will be compassionate to whomever I am compassionate." Then after all, this is not about the one who wants, nor about the one who runs, but about God who has mercy. For the writing says to Pharaoh that, "For this very thing I have raised you up: so that I might show in you my power and so that my name would be declared in all the land." Therefore after all, he has mercy on whomever he wants, but he hardens the one whom he wants.

Paulus anticipates an argument that God had given a birthright to the Jewish people and then revoked it. That would make God unfair. His counterargument is not all that simple, but it rests on God's sovereignty. The rule of birthright does not come from physical lineage but from God's authority. If God decides to be merciful to gentiles and allow them to become heirs of Abraham's promise, then that's up to God. How can someone argue from physical lineage, when God was the one who made the promise in the first place? God can grant favors if he pleases.

Regarding Pharaoh, even he -- a non-Jew -- became part of God's plan because Yahweh God so decided it. Yet Pharaoh was not Jewish, and God used him to declare his own power. If God could use an enemy of the Jewish people to serve the purposes of God's people, then this should serve as an example of the fact that the matter rests not in physical lineage but with God.

Therefore, you will say to me, "Why then does he still find fault? For who has opposed his plan?" O human, who are you who answers against God? "Will the thing that is formed say to the one forming it, 'Why did you make me' this way?' Or doesn't the potter have authority to make of the clay a vessel indeed for honor and one for dishonor out of the same mixture?"

The nature of the next anticipated question is, "What gives God the authority to judge?" After all, if God used Pharaoh, then isn't everything simply God's will? Who ever did anything that was against his plan? It is a rhetorical argument against free will, but Paulus counters it.

We human beings are God's creations. It is the creator who has the authority, not the creation. We do not have the authority to question God's plan. More specifically, doesn't God have the authority to decide whether to use us in one way or another? Doesn't he have the authority to decide to allow gentiles into the new covenant? After all, he made everyone. God's authority rests in the fact that he is the creator of all things. The direct quote comes from Isa 29:16, where

the prophet sees the greater purpose of God in Israel's spiritual blindness. God had said that he would do wonderful things among the people (v. 14), but they would not recognize those things because they were not with God (v. 13). Thus, God was opening a covenant for all humanity, but the hardened and foolish people would not accept it, and so they questioned God's judgment. The potter is also mentioned in Isa 45:9 and 64:8.

But what if God, wanting to display anger and to make known his power, carried with much longsuffering vessels of rage that were fitted for destruction? And what if this was so that he might make known the wealth of his glory on the vessels of mercy that were prepared earlier for glory? These vessels, us, he also called, not only from among Jewish people but also from among gentiles, as also he says to Hosea, "I will call my people the one who was 'not my people,' and I will call beloved the one who was 'unloved.'" And "it will be that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called sons of the living God."

The family of Hosea had reflected God's relationship with Israel. God had told Hosea to name his children according to his own relationship with Israel. Thus, Israel had found itself out of favor with God, but the one who had had no favor with God -- Israel -- was told twice (at 2:23 and 1:10) that God would restore favor and call Israel God's sons once again. In between, Israel was subject to a call of national reformation. To become sons of God meant acting like sons of God.

The same is true, then, for the gentiles. Although they were once not regarded as God's people, he had the authority to make them sons of God if indeed they began to act like sons of God. God could show the same love for them as he had done for Israel, for as the potter he alone had the authority to declare that his creations might have a more attractive use than they might seem to have been prepared for. Maybe the whole purpose was so that God's spiritual people (both Jewish and gentile) could be revealed and glorified. In other words, the whole "physical" way of looking at the notion of God's people was wrong and needed correction. Although certain Jewish people thought that they were somehow better than gentiles, some of them were "fitted for destruction," and God had been suffering through their behavior, looking ahead to the day when he would reveal what living spiritually was all about.

Now Isaiah calls out on behalf of Israel: "Even if the number of the sons of Israel should be like the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. For after completing a message and after shortening it, Yahweh will make a completion on the land." And just as Isaiah said earlier, "If the Lord of Hosts had not left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been likened to Gomorrah."

The idea of a spiritual Israel was not new to Jesus' teachings. God had already told the Jewish people that although there were numerous (physical) Jews, only a few of them would survive the siege of their land (which was a judgment of God) and return to Israel after the Babylonian Exile. Paulus applies this to the coming judgment at the hands of the Romans. Although physical Israel was numerous, spiritual Israel (the Christians) were a small remnant. Only they would remain after the destruction of the temple. In both Isaiah's account (10:22-3) and Paulus' application God was regarding the faithful ones as the true Israel.

Another quote from Isaiah (1:9) reminds the people that it was God's own generosity that allowed some to be spared. If not for that generosity, the Babylonians could have slaughtered all of the Jewish people. Similarly, God's true people would be saved through the coming judgment; the Romans would not slaughter them. The Jewish Christians would not be eradicated like Sodom and Gomorrah.

30 *Therefore, what will we say? That those gentiles who did not pursue justification laid hold of justification, but it was that justification that is from trust. But Israel, pursuing a code of justification did not come upon a code. Why? Because it was not out of trust but as from deeds. They struck upon a stone of tripping, just as it was written: "Look, I am placing in Zion...a stone of tripping and a rock of stumbling," and, "the one who trusts in it will not be disgraced."*

In the final analysis, the Jewish people had been given a path of teaching that was supposed to lead them to the teachings of Jesus. Some of those people did not grasp the truth of "justification that is from trust," preferring instead to think that justification could be deserved. Certain gentiles, on the other hand, learned this grand message, even though their people had not been given the Torah as a learning tool.

Thus, those Jewish people who were unfaithful had blinded themselves. They had become unable to see the wonderful thing that God had given them, and the teachings of the Anointed One had become a "rock of stumbling." Paulus combines two sayings from Isaiah. The first, from 28:16, indicates that the purpose of the precious stone (the spiritual Torah) was that it should serve as a foundation for Israel's future. The new structure was supposed to be constructed with justification in justice, wiping out the people's former "covenant with death" (v. 18).

Instead, the people's blindness had made God himself (in sending the Messiah) a "rock of stumbling" (Isa 8:14-15) for physical Israel. Paulus sees God's action in revealing the spiritual Torah (through the Messiah) as the placing of a cornerstone for a new foundation. The Jewish people were intended to realize that the Torah was spiritual and internal, and they were to build on that foundation. But those blinded ones (from Paulus' application of Isa 29) could not see that stone, and so they tripped over it.

"The one who trusts" -- Paulus applies this to those who do realize that God's Torah was intended to be spiritual. In Isaiah (28:16), the trusting person does not attempt to build too quickly (and therefore improperly). In Paulus' citation, this results in the disgrace of the Judaizer, who attempts to build the old religion on the new foundation, for after the Romans arrived there would be no Priestly Judaism.

10:1 *Brothers, indeed the good will of my heart and my supplication to God on their behalf is for salvation. For I am testifying to them that they have God's jealousy, but not according to knowledge. For while being ignorant of God's ethics and while seeking to set up their own ethics, they did not submit to God's ethics. For the Anointed One is the aim of the Torah to the point of justification for all those who trust.*

Ethics -- or "justification."

Paulus recognizes the good intentions of many of his Jewish countrymen, but although they were jealous for the things of God -- a good thing -- they were acting without the knowledge of the Messianic teachings. True justification comes not from a system of rituals but from God's generosity, through trust. Therefore, those who wanted to keep the rituals were trying to set up their own ethical system -- their own means for justification.

In doing that they were refusing to submit to the means of justification that God had put into place -- the only means of justification for anyone's sins. How is it the **only** means? Because the very Torah that they used to support their reliance on rituals had been pointing toward and promising the coming of the Anointed One and the new covenant. The spiritual explanation given by Jesus is what leads to "justification for all those who trust." So that justification again comes from trust and not through religion.

For Moses writes about that justification that is from the Torah, that "The person who does these things will live in them." But of the justification that is out of trust, it says this: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will rise up into the sky?'" that is, to bring down the Anointed One? Or "Who will descend into the deep?" that is, to bring up the Anointed from among the dead? On the contrary, what does it say? "The declaration is near you, in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the declaration of trust which we are heralding: that if you should acknowledge Lord Jesus with your mouth and should trust in your heart that God raised him from among the dead, you will be saved.

The first quote is Lev 18:5, which binds all of the statutes of the Torah on the Jewish people. Paulus' implication is that in order to be justified through the Torah, one would have to keep all of its statutes -- then they would have life. The passage in Leviticus does not promise justification, except to those who keep all of God's statutes.

If one views the Torah as the true means to salvation, there is the prescription: keep it all. But if one realizes that it was a teaching tool, pointing to a deeper concept of justification through trust, then the second/third saying makes more sense. Paulus appears to begin with Dt 9:4 and conclude with Dt 30:11-14. The passage in chapter 9 reads in part, "After Yahweh God has cast [the Anakim] out before you, do not say in your heart, 'It is because of my own ethics that Yahweh has brought me in to possess the land.'" The Jewish people were not granted the land of Israel because they deserved it. God drove out the Anakim and the land's inhabitants because those people were evil, not because the Israelites were so wonderfully deserving.

Chapter 30 indicates that the covenant is not impossible, and Paulus applies that statement to the **spiritual intent** of the Torah -- as Jesus explained it -- rather than to the actual "letter of the law." A more complete quote of the first question is, "Who will rise up into the sky for us and bring [the principle] to us, so that we may hear and do it?" The second question is, "Who will descend into the deep waters, and bring it to us, so that we may hear and do it?" Both questions are given as rationalizations of something impossible. Having heard the Torah, they might have reacted by saying, "Sure, we can do it ... if someone swims the ocean or flies into the sky to find out how." God wanted Israel to know that although the Torah seemed impossible from an earthly

standpoint, the deeper principle was possible. That deeper principle necessitated justification through trust and not through deeds.

Paulus likens the questions in Deuteronomy to nullifying the resurrection of the Messiah. Anyone who needed to rely on deeds would be nullifying the fact that Jesus had died and had been raised (already) from the dead, for his death and subsequent resurrection had inaugurated the new covenant -- a covenant teaching justification through trust. Relying on rituals and religion now would make that whole covenant useless.

If the Torah doesn't say that justification should come through deeds, what does it say? Where is the saving precept found? "The declaration is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you are able do it." (Dt 30:14) The declaration that they looked for from God -- the explanation as to how to have justification through such a system -- was in the mouths of the people and in their hearts. How was it in people's mouths? The envoys were proclaiming it? How did it enter people's hearts? Paulus will explain. For now, he quickly explains the content of that saving declaration which the envoys were heralding:

"if you should acknowledge Lord Jesus with your mouth and should trust in your heart that God raised him from among the dead, you will be saved." Some interpret this to say that people only need to believe that Jesus raised from the dead in order to have justification. That interpretation does not fit the context. Connecting the passage to the "mouth" and "heart" in Deuteronomy, Paulus points out that if someone really embraces the spiritual interpretation of the Torah -- as Jesus taught -- then not only will it show in his life, but also this is the trust through which justification comes. Knowing that Jesus really was the promised Anointed One and living life by the godly principles that he taught -- that is sufficient. But this is not a "deed" of any kind; it is simple trust. It is the trust that God honors to the point of justifying.

For it is trusted in the heart to the point of justification, and with the mouth to the point of salvation. For the writing says, "Everyone who trusts in it will not be disgraced." For there is no difference between both Jew and Greek, for he is Lord of all, and is wealthy enough for all things for those who call on him.

Continuing to say that the justifying principle is in the mouth and the heart, Paulus explains that this justifying faith is an active one. As Jacob also points out, no one is able to really trust God and not show it. Thus, it is in the heart that justification actually takes place, but God's spiritual Israel must demonstrate the principles of trust and love in their lives. The "mouth" here is extended to include any public profession (whether oral or not) of trust in the teachings of Jesus. At the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, those who stood up for justification by trust and against the idea of a permanent, physical, Jewish state and religion would not be disgraced. But such a trusting person would not have to be a Jew at all; a faithful gentile would suffice. For God "is wealthy enough for all things for those who call on him." That is, God will generously accept anyone who lives by trust, even though not all can be physical Israel.

For "each one who may call on the name of Yahweh will be saved." Therefore, how will they call on one in whom they have not trusted? Now how will they trust the one they did not hear about? Now how will they be hearing without someone heralding? But how will they herald unless they

are sent out? Just as it was written, "What beautiful things are the feet of the ones who are announcing the good message" of good things?

Paulus quotes the same passage as Peter (Acts 2) had applied to the opening of the new covenant. There, the passage had appeared to apply only to physical Israel (as part of the restoration of the kingdom). The passage predicted various things prior to the destruction of Jerusalem ("the great and majestic day of Yahweh"), and one of those things was that anyone who called on Yahweh might be saved. Now that Acts 10 has passed, Paulus is certain that the passage includes gentiles.

Yet how does this saving message pass from mouth to heart? How was it that the gentiles were coming to trust? After all, they couldn't call on Yahweh God unless they trusted in him, and they couldn't trust in him if they hadn't heard about him. But God had sent people out, the envoys, as heralds. They were the official representatives of the new covenant, telling people about the good message (Isa 52:7). Isaiah's good message was that the remnant of Israel would be spared; Paulus' message is similar, and so he applies the passage to the message of the internal Torah that Jesus had brought. Gentiles are saved because they are hearing the message, and they are hearing the message because God had the forethought to have Jesus send out messengers to them.

16 *But not all listened to the good message, for Isaiah says, "O Lord, who has trusted our report?" After all, trust is from hearing, but hearing is through the declaration of the Anointed One. But I say, didn't they hear? Indeed, "their musical sound went into all the land, and their declaration went into the farthest points of the habitation."*

In the time of Isaiah, not all of Israel had wanted to hear the saving message, and Isa 53:1 had pointed to the fact that many of them would reject the Anointed One when he came. Without a written New Testament, the normal way people heard the message was through the oral declarations of those who had been sent as witnesses to the Messiah. Yet Paulus anticipates questions about those who did not hear from the envoys.

Now merely hearing is not enough, for Israel had heard what Isaiah told them, and yet the majority were not spared, for they rejected it. The message had gone out everywhere, even if Isaiah did not take it there. The quote is Psa 19:4, which says that God himself spreads his good message. The heavens ring with it. Therefore, even if the envoys did not personally reach every Jewish person, God had sent the Messianic message everywhere, so that every Jewish person who did not embrace the spiritual Torah was without excuse. This thought parallels the earlier (ch. 1-2) line of reasoning about the impious gentiles having no excuse because they had the testimony to God from nature.

On the contrary, I say, didn't Israel know? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous about that which is not a nation; about a nation without understanding I will make you angry."

The question is rhetorical. The author has demonstrated that whether or not the envoys actually reached every Jewish person on earth, they had the Torah (which taught of the Messiah), and God had been trying to explain it to them. The context of the quotation (Dt 32:21) is the song of Moses. In that song, Moses complains about the Israelites who left Yahweh for false gods (vv.

15-18), on account of which God was angry toward them. Referring to the people then living as a "perverse generation" (v. 20, see also Acts 2:40), Moses speaks for a provoked God. In its context, the term "not a nation" plays off of the charge that they served deities who were "not gods."

Paulus' application to his present day is that like those earlier Israelites, the Jewish people of his day were clinging to a system that had become an idol for them. Therefore, God would aggravate them with gentiles who were not a chosen nation. The context of Deuteronomy is in that of an impending judgment, a fact which no doubt caused Paulus to consider the obvious parallel -- for God was about to judge Israel through Rome.

Now Isaiah was daring, and he says, "I was found among those who were not seeking me. I became apparent to those who were not asking for me." But he says to Israel, "For the whole day I stretched out my hands toward an unpersuaded and contradicting people."

God was about to judge his people not because he was rejecting them, but because they had rejected him. Isaiah indicated (65:1-2) that he had been sent by God, but that the people refused to listen to him. These were people who were not truly keeping the Torah (v.4), just as Paulus considered that his own countrymen were rejecting the true Torah. In the oracle, God puts away the Israelites who rejected him (vv. 13f.) and sets up a new state of affairs (vv. 17f.), the "new skies and new land." This would be the state of affairs under new covenant thinking, just as Johannes also wrote (Rv 21:1ff.).

11:1 *Therefore I say: did God put away his chosen ones? Let it not happen! For I too am an Israelite, from Abraham's seed, of Ben-Yamin's tribe. "God has not put away his people," whom he foreknew. Or don't you know what the writing says in Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? "O Lord, 'they killed your prophets, they tore down your altars, and I was left behind alone, and they were seeking my life.'"*

Having proven that God was rejecting those who rejected him, Paulus sets out to demonstrate that God was not rejecting a single *faithful* Jew. When God had warned the people that to ask for a king was a rejection of his rule (1 Sam 8, 10, 12), the people were upset for a season that God would destroy them. But Samuel told them that if they served Yahweh "faithfully with all your heart," then "Yahweh will not cast away his people." (1 Sam 12:22) And so it was not the faithful but the unfaithful who were being cast away.

Similarly, Elijah had been looking for Yahweh's guidance (1 Kings 19), because his nation had rejected God and his covenant. God's messenger showed Elijah that his power might be manifesting itself in ways that were not obvious. God removed Elijah as a prophet, replacing him with Elisha, but the messenger provided words of comfort to the weary prophet:

But what does the divine warner say to him? "I left behind for myself seven thousand men, who did not bend a knee to Ba'al." Therefore, in the same way also, in the present season, it has happened that there is a remnant according to a choice of generosity. But if by generosity, not from deeds; otherwise generosity has become no longer a generous thing.

God's messenger pointed out (1 Kgs 19:18) that although Israel at large was destined to continue rejecting God, there were some of them -- the remnant -- who would never give in to the people's idolatry. Paulus likens these to those Christian Jews who would not attach themselves to the idolatry of serving religion rather than God. But this special status was not something that they had earned; it was due only to God's generosity in recognizing their trust.

7 Then what? That which Israel is hunting, this it did not obtain. But the chosen one obtained it. Now those who were left were hardened, just as it was written, "God gave them a spirit of coma: for their eyes to not see and their ears to not hear, until the day--today." And David says, "Let their table become for a snare" and for a trap, "and for a stumbling-block and for their repayment. Let their eyes be darkened for them to not see and let their backs bend down together through all things."

Paulus now feels compelled to conclude his case regarding the Jewish people. His conclusion is that although Israel had really been seeking the coming of the Anointed One and the revelation of the spiritual Torah (and new covenant), "it did not obtain." Once again, Paulus depends on the writings of the oracles of Isaiah to demonstrate his point. He has previously cited Isaiah 29, and here adds to the context of that chapter, quoting verse 10. "God gave them" expresses a an act of choice on their parts (i.e., rejecting God's guidance) in active terms -- similar to God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Thus, in Isa 29:9, the people "stupify" themselves, and this is expressed in v. 10 as a state of coma, a state that God allowed to be brought on.

The Davidic Psalm 69 reads in part as Paulus has referenced it (vv. 22-3). The psalm contains pleas to Yahweh and a curse on his enemies. Paulus' citation begins the "curse" portion, in which David's enemies are so blinded spiritually (v. 23) that they continue in their ritual actions (v. 22), not realizing that God is about to judge them (vv. 24f.). Applying this to the coming judgment through Rome, Paulus recognizes that his modern day "blinded" countrymen would continue in their ritual practices until the Romans took away their nation.

Therefore, I say: Did they trip so that they might fall? Let it not happen! On the contrary, by their wandering, salvation belongs to the gentiles, for them to be made jealous. Now if their wandering is the wealth of creation and if their failure is the wealth of gentiles, how much rather is their fullness?!

Was there any purpose at all in these things? Paulus sees one. Their rejection of the spiritual Torah resulted in good fortune for those gentiles who were open to the message. We read elsewhere that Paulus believed that it was always God's intent to admit gentiles to the new covenant. Here then, Paulus explains what he believes to be the circumstances that God knew of in advance -- circumstances which made way (at least figuratively) for the admission of gentiles. And so, their "wandering" and "failure" have actually served the greater purpose of enriching all creation.

To the Gentiles

13 Now I am telling you gentiles (then indeed, as much as I am an envoy of gentiles, I will glorify my service): that if there is a way I would make my flesh jealous and would save some of them.

For if their casting away is the creation's reconciliation, what is their coming toward it, if not life from among the dead? Now if the first fruit is holy, the mixture is also. And if the root is holy, the branches are also.

Since his Jewish readers would have the most trouble understanding and accepting his explanation, Paulus has directed his writing largely toward them thusfar. At this point, however, his case has been made. Lest the gentiles believe that somehow they have acquired a superior or special status in God's eyes, he must now turn to them and make clarification.

"I am an envoy of gentiles" -- The author appeals to them on the basis of his own "calling." Since he had been called by God and sent to gentiles, it is fully appropriate for him to "glorify his service" by addressing the gentile readers directly and specifically. Still, he wishes that he could reach his countrymen. In fact, he will say later that he is confident that some of them will embrace the Anointed One and his spiritual interpretation of the Torah. Since his people's rejection (at large) of their Messiah has resulted in the covenant being opened worldwide -- a wonderful thing -- how much more wonderful will it be when some of them embrace Jesus?! It will be like life from the dead.

Here, Paulus begins an analogy. Holy first fruit -- the product of the tree of "spiritual" or "true" Israel -- indicates that all of the tree's product will be holy. This relates to the code from the Torah which indicated (Num 15:20-1, for example) that if the first portion was dedicated to God, then the rest became suitable for consumption and would not be defiled. Similarly, if the whole tree ("the root," above) is dedicated to God, then all of its branches belong to Yahweh God. Thus, the spiritual Israel is God's, and so everyone who belongs to spiritual Israel (by way of accepting the spiritual guidance of the Torah) belongs to God.

But if some of the branches were broken off but if you, who were a wild olive branch, were grafted among the branches and became a partner of the root and of the fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. Now if you do not boast, you are not sustaining the root, but the root is sustaining you. Therefore, you will say, "Branches were pruned off so that I might be grafted." Nicely. They were pruned off by distrust, but you were made to stand by trust. Do not have a high attitude but one of fear.

Each person gets to decide (by virtue of free will) whether or not to belong to the "holy tree." If some of those (Jewish) people ("branches") decided not to belong, then they were "broken off" -- they are no longer part of the tree. Still, that leaves room for "wild" olive branches -- gentiles, who were not originally growing on the tree -- to be "grafted" into the root of the spiritual Israel. Thus, Paulus' analogy is intended to explain his Biblical citations (above).

However, should his gentile readers feel *too* special because God had planned to include them in the covenant at the apparent expense of certain Jewish people, Paulus wants them to know that it was lack of trust which caused those Jewish people to leave the true Israel, and lack of trust can cause the gentile readers to suffer the same fate.

For if God did not spare those branches that were by nature, he would not spare you either. Therefore, look at the kindness and severity of God: severity, indeed, to those who have fallen

but God's kindness to you--if you continue by the kindness (otherwise you too will be cut off). Now they too will be grafted if they do not continue by distrust. For God is powerful enough to graft them again. For if you were cut off from a wild (by nature) olive tree and were grafted, aside from nature, into a nice olive tree, how much rather will those who are nice branches by nature be grafted into their own olive tree?

The Jewish people had received cultivation from God, including the Torah and prophets. If some of them had rejected him and had been cast away, how much more should the gentiles fear God if they were to become distrustful? Make no mistake: they would continue to experience God's kindness only if they acted out of trust, for it is because of trust that they are part of the new covenant.

Similarly, if certain Jewish people were to change their minds and accept the teachings of Jesus, they would become part of the covenant -- and the "tree," a blessing which would be quite natural for God to grant.

25 *For brothers, I don't want you to be ignorant of this secret (so that you would not be people who mind yourselves): that hardness (by a measure) has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the gentiles should enter. And in the same way, all Israel will be saved, just as it was written: "The rescuer will come from Zion. He will turn away impiety from Jacob. And this is the covenant with me, for them, when I would take away their sins."*

Since lack of trust would so easily remove them from God's favor, the letter's gentile readers should not become so conceited as to "mind themselves" -- i.e., "look out for number one." Instead, they should realize that there would come a day when the old covenant would exist no longer. Spiritual Israel would no longer have the distinction between "Jew" and "gentile." Consequently, those who were by lineage Jewish people and gentiles would enter equally, after this initial time of Jewish rejection (and apparent gentile dominance) passed. Isaiah 59 calls for national reformation and forgiveness. If any Jewish person changes his mind and accepts Jesus' Messianic teachings, then God would save him as well, forgiving any earlier rejection. In this later period, then, there would be full equality, just as God does not show personal bias.

Indeed, according to the good message, they are enemies on account of you, but according to the choice they are beloved on account of the ancestors. For the free gifts and God's choice are unregrettable things. For just as you were once unpersuaded by God (but now you have received mercy by their distrust), in the same way also now, they were unpersuaded by your receipt of mercy so that they might now receive mercy also. For God has shut up all things together for unpersuasion, so that he might be merciful to all.

In bringing Jewish people into the covenant once again, creating that situation of equality -- wherein "he might be merciful to all" -- God has created a situation of balance. The gentiles were once considered "enemies," but gentiles who become and remain part of the spiritual Israel are his children. Similarly, those Jews who rejected their Messiah became "enemies" (so that gentiles might embrace God), but as some of them later accept Jesus, they too would receive the mercy shown to the gentiles. All of this teaches a lesson as to the greatness of God's mercy!

33 *Oh, the depth of the wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are his judgments,
And how untraceable are his ways!
"For who knew God's mind? Or who became his co-planner? Or who gave to him in advance
and will be given back from him?"
Because from him and through him and for him are all things.
To him be glory for the ages. A-men.*

Isaiah 40, which heralds the coming of John the Baptist as the one who would prepare the way for God to send the Anointed One (vv. 3-5) mentions God's arrival (through the Messiah) in terms that announce the wonder in God's majestic ways (vv. 12f.). Therefore, Paulus properly applies this to the situation that he has just mentioned. God's judgment and ways are so wonderful -- so far beyond our own discernment, and we must realize the vastness of God if we are to comprehend the wisdom of his having chosen to first establish a nation for himself (to carry the teachings of the Torah) and then to open the deeper message up to the whole world, for them to enjoy it and to marvel at Yahweh's greatness.

The quote is borrowed from a Septuagint-based text of Isa 40:13-4, and Paulus' framing words go from the most directly applicable (God's foreknowledge and plan regarding the Jews and gentiles) to the most general -- that all things exist because of, through, and for him. A brief statement makes the section into a doxology.

12:1 *Therefore, brothers, I am advising you, through God's deep feelings, to present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy, well-pleasing to God, your rational religious service. And don't be conformed to this age, but be transformed to the renovation of the mind, for you to examine that which is what God wants: the good thing and the well-pleasing thing and the complete thing.*

Most commentaries break off at this point, believing that the context of Chapter 11 stops with the doxology. However, both the construction ("therefore"), the address to gentile Christians, and the following (ch. 13) address to all of his readers collectively tend to place this chapter within the context of the admonition to his gentile readers.

Although certain ideas here would certainly be applicable outside the immediate context, Paulus is indicating the necessity for his gentile Christian readers to behave in a manner indicative of the fact that they are following God earnestly. Rather than participating in the Jewish sacrificial system, they should present themselves as "living sacrifices." The term "well-pleasing" reminds us of the praise given of Henoah (Gen 5:22). Henoah "walked with God," or "was well-pleasing," and Paulus appears to be reminding his gentile readers that even though they were not part of the first covenant, they (like Henoah) can be "well-pleasing" -- not through the perfection of their own deeds but by committing themselves fully to God in trust. This would be their "rational religious service," that is, it would be what service logically made sense for them, and the term "religious service" was often used by the Jewish people to denote obedience to the written Torah and later traditions. Thus, the gentiles would be "acceptable sacrifices" if they performed the "religious service" of committing themselves fully to God.

"Don't be conformed to this age" indicates the mindset of the Judaizers. The next age, during which there would be no temple worship or Priestly Judaism, was about to arrive. The gentile readers should not consider allowing themselves to be pressured into doing what the Judaizers want them to do, instead being "transformed" into spiritually-minded people. For if they would only reject the counsel given them by the Judaizers, then their minds (attitudes) would be made new in the recognition of the internal and spiritual Torah. With the attitude of spiritual-mindedness, they would be able to properly examine whatever people might say and would be able to determine whether what the Judaizers told them was true or not (and of course it was not).

Paulus is talking about a shift in paradigm. No one who wanted to retain the traditional mental attitude about the Torah would be able to understand the new teachings. Jesus related it elsewhere as trying to put new wine into old wineskins. Paulus hoped that his gentile readers would adopt the new perspective fully.

For I am saying to all who are among you, through that generous thing that was given to me, don't have an attitude higher than what attitude it is necessary to have. On the contrary, have an attitude to the point of sobermindedness, as God has apportioned to each a measure of trust.

Still relating this to his previous point about the gentiles not being superior to the Jewish people in any way, Paulus points out (with God's guidance) that a highminded or proud attitude is contrary to the teachings of the Anointed One. Instead, the Messiah had taught clear-headed humility. Trust God in humility, regarding everyone as an equal.

For just as in one body we have many members, but the members do not all have the same activity, in the same way we (the many) are one body in the Anointed One, but individually we are members of one another. Now since we have different free gifts we should use them according to the generosity that was given us: if prophecy, according to the calculation of your trust; if service, in the service; if one who teaches, in teaching; one who advises, in the advice; one who gives out, in simplicity; one who presents an outstanding example, with diligence; one who has mercy, with cheerfulness.

Here we have a general principle, even though Paulus is only applying it to a certain situation. The gentiles should not expect everyone to be alike, for Jews and gentiles certainly had different backgrounds, and people might very likely have different ways of thinking and different abilities. Every child of God belongs to every other. The teachings of the Anointed One, and therefore his loving way of thinking, provides every Christian with a common foundation and basis. Rather than separating into a "gentile group" and a "Jewish group" (like denominations), the readers ought to use their God-given abilities to serve one another.

Every gift was given freely from God for such a purpose, to use however it might be natural. Paulus begins his short list with miraculous gifts, so that the readers would immediately recognize that every good gift comes from God.

The list itself is composed of interesting elements:

prophecy, which would clearly be recognized as a miraculous gift whose purpose was to benefit

others (see also 1 Corinthians); **service**, which is clearly others-focused. From that point on, the list changes... instead of referring to the function, Paulus begins to refer to the person who performs that function. The **one who teaches** is not a teaching position but represents anyone doing kind of teaching. Again the act is focused on the learning of others, and so the teaching must be done appropriately -- "in teaching". That is, its purpose is the instruction of another person. The **"one who advises"** must provide comforting advice to another person, and so, the advisement itself is directed toward the benefit of someone else. The "one who gives out" must give "with simplicity." Simply put, anyone who gives to someone else should give for the sheer purpose of helping that other person out. There can be no ulterior motives behind the giving. Similarly, the person who presents his/her life as an example to others should do so for the benefit of others. It is not yourself that you are benefitting, so any good example needs to be performed diligently. Finally, anyone who performs a merciful action must do so "cheerfully" and not begrudgingly, for the mercy you show is for the benefit of someone else, and not for your own convenience.

Thus, Paulus' intent was to show the gentile Christian that they needed to use every good gift that God gave them to benefit their fellow Christians -- most definitely including the Jewish Christians and even those who might Judaize.

9 Love should be without hypocrisy, despising evil and adhering to good. Have familial love with brotherly affection for one another, regarding one another with honor as ahead of you. Do not be slow regarding diligence. Be jealous-spirited, serving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, enduring affliction, attending to prayer, sharing for the needs of the holy ones, aggressively pursuing an affection for strangers. Praise those who persecute, and do not curse--to rejoice with those who rejoice, to cry with those who are crying, having the same attitude for one another: not having an attitude toward high things, but conforming yourselves to the humble things. Do not become mindful about yourself.

The author continues the same thought, expanding it to a most natural application of the teachings of Jesus. When showing love toward the Jewish Christians, it should be a genuine love, and not a hypocritical one. Their affection, too, should be genuine, and they should remember to put others first -- whether or not the "others" are Jewish or gentile. The diligence that they should show is in loving others.

Then what about the hardships that they were facing on account of the Judaizers? They should focus applying God's teachings and look ahead to the time that was coming soon. About the hardship, they should "endure" it in prayer. No matter how rough the times ahead might become, they should live lives of love for all people. If they are persecuted, they should not curse but praise them, for the Christian is not to repay bad for bad. This is not to say that they should not be sympathetic to those who are suffering. On the contrary, they should rejoice with the happy but also cry with the sad. In all of this, they should remember the things written earlier: that even though they possess God's favor, there is no cause to be anything but humble. Self-centeredness will not serve them well, for Jesus taught of love for others.

You should not be giving back bad for bad to anyone; supply nice things in the presence of people. If it is possible for you, be at peace with all people. Do not vindicate yourselves, beloved,

but give a place for the anger. For it was written, "Vindication is mine. I will repay," says Yahweh. "If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he thirsts, give him to drink. For as you do this, you will be piling up coals of fire on his head." Do not be defeated by badness, but be victorious over badness with good.

It is clearly the case that Paulus had heard of the ill will that was spreading between gentile Christians and the Judaizers. His point is strongly emphatic: that no matter what anyone should do to them, they were not to exact vengeance. God would vindicate them, as Dt 32:35 indicated. The reminder of God's vindication points forward to their own vindication and to the coming judgment of Israel.

The second quote is a proverb (Pv 25:21-2), a reminder that as God punishes evil, he rewards good. The best way that they could exact vengeance, then, was to show mercy, for their example would go before God at the time of judgment. If the readers resulted to violence, they would have been "defeated by badness." Paulus urged them instead to gain the victory by being good. This agrees with the Torah and Prophets and is favorable to Jesus' explanation of it (Mt 5:11f.), which also expects the coming vindication.

Advice for Everyone

13:1 *You should be submissive to all superior authorities. For there is no authority except by God; now the ones who are have been arranged by God. And so, the one who arranges himself against the authority has stood against the arrangement of God. Now the ones who stand against the authority are receiving judgment for themselves. For the ones who rule are not a fright to a good deed but to a bad one. Now do you want to be afraid of the authority? Do the good thing, and you will have praise from it. For he is God's servant to you for good. But if you should do bad, then be afraid. For he does not carry a sword in vain. For he is God's servant, a vindicator for anger, to those who practice badness.*

Now the conversation shifts, at least momentarily, to more general matters. Some translate, "you should all be submissive...", for here the contexts changes to include all of Paulus' readers. Everyone should submit to the Roman government. The gentile readers should know to be submissive, but the Jewish readers might have read Paulus' letter in shock, hoping that judgment might not come to Israel. Therefore, Paulus urges them all to allow Rome to act as God's vessel.

The Roman role in judging Israel was under the authority of God, therefore they should not oppose it. Anyone who might try to resist the Roman authority would be resisting God and therefore would become part of the judgment. Consequently, the Jewish Christians must sever all political ties to physical Israel. This was surely a hard teaching to swallow. Paulus adds that the readers who have no allegiance to the earthly nation would have nothing to fear when the Roman armies arrived. After all, there would be nothing that the Romans could take from them. Instead of fearing the Romans, they should live their lives well. Only if they "do bad" -- by returning to Judaism -- would they experience the judgment of God through the Roman government. In this case, the government is portrayed as a harsh vindicator with a sword, but that vengeance only comes (with God's anger) on those who "practice badness" -- that is, those who choose to fight for a physical nation in opposition to the teachings of the Messiah.

This should not be construed as an announcement that EVERY government is God's agent!

So, there is a necessity to be submissive, not only on account of the anger, but also on account of the conscience. For also you pay taxes for this reason. For they are God's religious servants, attending to this very thing. Pay out your debts to everyone: tax to whom you owe a tax; fear to whom you owe fear; honor to whom you owe honor.

It was "a necessity" that every Christian show due deference to the Roman government -- to allow the Romans to act as God's vindicators. This was not only a necessity because of "the anger" -- because of the judgment coming on Israel -- but it was also a matter of conscience. It was the right thing to do. Living under Roman rule, they paid a tribute tax. It was a debt, paid for the privileges that Roman governance brought. Just as they owed that "debt" to the government they should also pay the debt of submission, since Rome was about to be God's servant.

Owe nothing to anyone except love to one another. For the one who loves the other is fulfilling the Torah. For there is this: "You will not commit adultery. You will not murder. You will not steal. You will not strongly desire." And if there is any other precept, it is brought under a head by this saying, "You will love your neighbor as yourself." Love for your neighbor works no wrong. Therefore, love is a fulfillment of the Torah.

Pay your debts, Paulus says, but owe nothing. The segue leaves the Roman government behind and focuses on those relationships between Christians. As Jesus taught, love is the fulfillment of the whole Torah. Quoting bits from the Decalogue, Paulus reminds the Christians in Rome that every teaching in the Torah is summed up by the admonition to love. Leviticus 19:18 reminds the Jewish reader that the gentile is to be loved, and it reminds the gentile reader that he must not exact vengeance on any (Jewish) Christian: "You will not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you will love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus had explained that the one principle that most explained the Torah was the precept of love. The Jewish readers would recognize not only that Jesus had taught this but also that the Torah was indeed explained by and an explanation of love. The gentile readers knew the teachings of Jesus and were expected not to exact vengeance, knowing that their whole lives were to be lives of trust and love.

11 *And do this knowing the season, because it is already the hour for us to rise up from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we trusted. The night has progressed, but the day is near. Therefore, we should cast off the deeds of darkness; we should be clothed with the armor of light. As in daytime, we should walk in an attractive way, not with revelings and drinking parties, not with sex acts and debaucheries, not with strife and jealousy. But you should be clothed with the Lord Anointed Jesus and you should not make a forethought for the strong desires of the flesh.*

Again Paulus reminds his readers of the coming judgment on Israel. "Salvation" refers not to eternal life but to the Christians' vindication by God through the Roman destruction of the temple and occupation of Israel. Knowing that all of this was soon to come, the Roman Christians were instructed to act properly. Separately, he advised them to treat one another well, and now he does

so collectively, mentioning "inappropriate behavior" of both a gentile and universal manner. Of course, his focus is on the last two items in his list: the readers should avoid strife and jealousy toward one another.

Consequently, when Paulus writes that they should not make a single thought to engage in the "strong desires of the flesh," he is referring to quarreling, strife, sectarian divisions, and acts of revenge. We may certainly believe, though, that the statement is true in general.

Regarding Religious Convictions

14:1 *Now accept (not for discriminations of reasonings) the one who is weak in trust. Someone indeed trusts to eat all things, but the one who is weak eats herbs. The one who eats should not despise the one who does not eat, but the one who does not eat should not judge the one who eats, for God accepts him.*

Now the author treads on dangerous ground. How should the (Jewish and gentile) Christians deal with those Jewish Christians who cling to certain aspects of Judaism, such as the Sabbath, the ceremonial cycle, and the dietary code? Paulus labels such people as "weak." Anyone who is able to realize that those things had been mentioned in the Torah so as to teach a deeper principle has no need to keep them literally, as a code of actions. On the other hand, he recognized the difficulty inherent in giving up centuries-long traditions immediately. What should that person do, and how should everyone else behave?

First of all, each person should allow the other to hold his own opinion and to **live by that opinion**. If one person wants to give up the dietary code, that is acceptable (because the diet was there for a specific purpose only). If another wishes to keep the dietary code, that's acceptable too. Each Christian should respect the other's opinion and allow him/her to live according to his (her) own convictions. After all, every Christian is acceptable before God.

Who are you who judge another's house-servant? He stands or falls for his own lord. But he will stand, for it is possible for God to stand him up.

This is one principle that Paulus regards as somewhat simple: that whether someone follows the dietary code or not, they are doing so out of an honest religious conviction. This is not a situation in which one person wants the freedom to do something just because they believe they should have that freedom. Neither is this the case that someone simply doesn't like what another person is doing. Instead, each person is acting from a religious conviction, and God upholds such honesty of conviction.

Someone indeed judges a day better than another day, but someone else judges every day to be the same. Each one should be fully assured in his own mind. The one who minds the day minds for the Lord. The one who eats, eats for the Lord, for he thanks to God. And the one who does not eat, does his not eating for the Lord, and he thanks God. For none of us lives for himself, and none dies for himself. For both if we should live, we are living for the Lord, and if we should die, we are dying for the Lord. Therefore, both if we should live and if we should die, we are the

Lord's. For the Anointed One died and lived from this reason: so that he might be lord both of dead and living.

The "strong" position is that all days are alike, so that keeping the Sabbath and feast days has become unimportant in the New Covenant. There was a principle in each of the feast days, and there was a principle behind the Sabbath, which showed honor to God. Neither the strong nor the weak can let go of that principle. However, the two positions are both honest convictions, and each should be allowed to coexist with the other. After all, every honest conviction is a conviction based on God: the purpose of the action is to honor God. Each of us must allow one another to live for God according to his own convictions, without trying to make him conform to our opinions. Even if one lives and another dies, we live and die for the Lord, and Jesus is still Lord of his dead followers.

Now you, why are you judging your brother? Or you, why are you despising your brother? For all will be presented at God's tribunal. For it was written:

"I am alive," says Yahweh that, "every knee will bend to me, and every tongue will fully acknowledge God."

Then after all, each of us will give an account to God about himself.

Not only should Christians not try to force others to conform to their opinions, but also Paulus expresses adamantly that those who do so will be judged by God. Since Yahweh is a true and sovereign god (Isa 45:23), everyone must account for his actions. Consequently, those who cause sectarian division by compelling others to conform to their opinions (or leave) will be judged by God for such horrendous actions.

The Stumbling-Block Principle

13 *Therefore, we should no longer judge one another. On the contrary, judge this instead: not to place a tripping-stone or stumbling block for a brother. I know and am persuaded in Lord Jesus that nothing is common by itself, except for the one who considers it to be common. It is common for him. For if your brother is made sorrowful through food, you are no longer walking according to love. Don't destroy with food the one on whose behalf the Anointed One died!*

So, how do we avoid stepping on another person's convictions? Paulus brings up what is commonly known as the "Stumbling Block Principle." Some people apply this principle with so broad a brush that it does not allow people to act according to their own convictions. Such application is out of context and plainly inaccurate. Therefore, we must examine the situation in detail.

"Nothing is common by itself." The Jewish people regarded things and activities as holy (dedicated to God), unholy/unclean (opposed to God), and common (everything else). The statement that nothing is common by itself indicates that any activity that is not sinful can be devoted to God. The author has already indicated that someone can honor God by keeping the Sabbath and by regarding all days as equal.

"The one who considers it to be common...it is common for him." In the immediate application, it would not be dedicated to God if someone who believed that the Sabbath was special should act as though it were not -- because someone told him to act that way. The broader principle is this: it is not a good thing to act against your convictions, whatever those convictions might be. It doesn't matter what the "other guy" does, but if you are doing something that you think is wrong, then for you it *is* wrong because it affects your conscience.

The application that Paulus makes here is to the dietary code. If you force someone to live according to the dietary code -- against their convictions -- then living that way is wrong for them. On the other hand, if you convince someone with dietary convictions to eat pork or shrimp (forbidden foods), then you have made them do something that is wrong for them.

Therefore, don't let your good thing be spoken of as evil. For God's kingdom is not about food and drink but about justification and peace and joy in a holy spirit. For the one who is enslaved to the Anointed One in this is well pleasing to God and is approved to people.

In the overall scheme of things, we are judged by our own actions, which must be in accordance with our own convictions. The Christian should not allow others to malign his convictions, and all should remember that such differences are unimportant. God's kingdom "is not about food and drink." How are things to be done? That's unimportant, for the message is internal. Justification (through trust), peace, and joy ... these (spiritual) things are important. We must allow others to follow their own convictions and not give up our own, remembering that our honest disagreements are not so important -- the spiritual message in our lives, that's the important matter.

19 *Therefore after all, we should pursue the things of peace and the things for one another's construction. Do not let go God's work on account of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are a bad thing to that person who eats on account of tripping. It is a nice thing not to eat meat, nor to drink wine, nor to do anything in which your brother trips, or stumbles, or is made weak.*

Focus then on the things that are important. Instead of pointing out others' differences and trying to make them conform to your opinions, submit to one another in love. Treat the other person as your equal. "All things are clean" because both your idea and the other person's idea are dedicated to God if they are performed from conviction.

"It is a nice thing..." if you do not try to compel someone to follow **your** convictions instead of their own. If someone is made to follow your convictions, they might be made weak as a result; do not allow this.

You have trust. Hold it by yourself in God's presence. Blessed is the one who does not judge himself in what he approves. But the one who discriminates, if he should eat, he is condemned, because it is not out of trust. Now all which is not from trust is sin.

"You have trust." You have developed a conviction or an opinion about a matter. "Hold it by yourself" -- If it is **your** conviction, then you should live by it. But "by yourself" signifies not trying to have others live by the same conviction (unless they too share it).

If every Christian lives by his convictions, others should not make him feel guilty so that he "judges himself" in "what he approves." Others should not make others feel bad about what they believe is right. Instead, every person should act according to his own convictions, thereby not condemning himself. Anyone who acts against a conviction is doing what he believes wrong and therefore is in sin.

This is a strong statement, but roughly translated it means, "Follow your convictions, and leave the other guy alone to follow his." That's simple and to the point.

15:1 *Now we the able ones are bound to bear the weaknesses of the powerless. Each of us should please his neighbor for good, toward construction. For also the Anointed One did not please himself; on the contrary, just as it was written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me."*

"Bear the weaknesses of the powerless." The one who has no problem with a certain activity certainly should be strong enough to allow the "weaker" brother to continue on his own path without judging him. This was written for the more enlightened Christian who, like Paulus himself, realized that the festivals and dietary code were a thing of the past. If someone still has a problem with ham or the Sabbath, allow that person to continue to grow spiritually -- do not interfere. This will make the other Christian feel more assured, and it follows the example of Jesus himself, who allowed the reproaches of others to "fall on him."

For the things that were written previously for our teaching, they were written so that through endurance and through the advice of the writings we would have hope. Now may the God of the endurance and of the advice give you to have the same attitude among one another, according to Anointed Jesus, so that with the same desire, with one mouth, you would glorify the God and Father of Anointed Jesus our Lord.

The Torah was not meant to become a device for binding others to a set of regulations, although some Jewish people were treating it that way, and certain Jewish Christians were beginning to follow suit. Instead, the Torah was intended as a description of the true, spiritual, Torah. Therefore, the Torah should be a source of hope for those who read it. Paulus therefore hopes that everyone will share his attitude, which is the attitude of Jesus. If the readers were able to accept one another's differences, then they would all be happy to glorify God together.

7 *So, accept one another, just as also the Anointed One accepted you for God's glory. For I say: the Anointed One became a servant of circumcision on behalf of God's truth, so as to make firm the promises of the ancestors, and for the gentiles to glorify God on behalf of mercy, just as it was written:*

"On account of this I will fully acknowledge you among nations and play music to your name."

And again it says,

"Nations, be glad with his people." And again,

"All nations, praise the Lord, and all the people extol him." And again Isaiah says,

"There will be a root of Yeshai, even the one who will stand up to rule nations. Nations will hope in him."

Paulus' appears to consider his case for acceptance to be very strong, for not much support is required. Still, he mentions again the plan to bring gentiles into the covenant, not superior to but equal to their Jewish counterparts. "God's truth" refers to the spiritual Torah, as contrasted with any other interpretation of the written Torah. This usage of "truth" is consistent with other NT uses of the term, most notably in Johannes' writings.

The citations do not focus on the acceptance aspect but on God's involvement among nations other than Israel. Psa 18:49, Dt 32:42, Psa 117:1, and Isa 11:10 are the sources for these quotes. The last quote contains the strongest support, and so it is placed last. The "root of Yeshai" was considered by most Jewish commentators to refer to the Anointed One. Yeshai was David's father, and so one of his descendants was going to bring peace and fair judgment to Israel (see Isa 11-12 in their entirety). Paulus has demonstrated that the plan to introduce gentiles into a covenant was predicted. In the context, there would also be peace, despite the mingling of Jewish and gentile peoples.

Now may the God of the hope fill you with all favors and peace in trust, to the point of making you abundant in hope with the power of holy breath.

This is a carefully-worded blessing. Paulus desires for:

- **peace** -- that the readers come to accept one another's differences
- **in trust** -- relying on trust and not on rituals or the written code
- **abundant in hope** -- Paulus has said that his hope stems from living the spiritual message
- **holy breath** -- God's spiritual blessings come to those who are truly following him, and not to those who reject him. As an envoy, Paulus has occasionally written "with holy breath"

Explanation for the Letter

14 *Now I am persuaded about you, my brothers, even I myself, that you are full of goodness, having been filled with all knowledge, being able also to admonish one another. But I have written to you more daringly, brothers, so as to remind you in part, on account of the generosity that was given to me by God, [on account of] my being a religious servant of Anointed Jesus to the gentiles, giving temple service to God's good message -- so that the offering of the gentiles would become acceptable, having been made holy with holy breath.*

The writer is nearing his letter's conclusion, and so he returns to the context of chapter one -- his explanation for the letter. He summarizes the content in between introduction and conclusion as a reminder of God's generosity, and indeed the middle section of the letter focuses on God's generous treatment of both Jewish people and gentiles. He describes his own role as envoy to gentiles as being a "religious servant," one who might serve at the temple. Therefore, he gives (temple) service to the message of freedom, the spiritual Torah. God has already testified that the admission of gentiles was part of the plan behind the internal Torah, and now Paulus explains that his work, too, happens so that the offerings that the gentiles would make (in God's temple)

would be acceptable. Thus, Paulus serves in the form of priest or Levite on behalf of the gentiles, but of course this is intended figuratively.

17 *I have a boast in the Anointed about the things that direct toward God. For I won't dare to speak of those things that the Anointed One did not work out through me for the listening of the gentiles, with word and deed, with the power of his signs and wonders, with the power of God's breath. And so I strove ambitiously to announce the good message where the Anointed One had not been named, so that I would not be constructing on another's foundation. But, just as it was written, "They will see, to whom it had not been related about him; and they will understand, who had not heard."*

"The things that direct toward God" refers to the message of the spiritual Torah, which points Jesus' followers to God's very nature, a nature summarized by faithfulness and love. "The things that the Anointed One did not work out" refers to anything that might go beyond the simple, spiritual Torah. The writer is careful in his other writings to point out those things that came directly from Jesus and those things that are his own ideas (especially in 1 Corinthians). The reasoning for that careful distinction is here: Paulus never would wish that his readers go beyond the teachings of Jesus. His own explanations, then, are subject to what Jesus did and taught, and the teachings of the Messiah were given to Paulus so that he might explain the message to the gentiles. God's miraculous gift, the holy breath, was given to testify to that message.

Paulus never wished to interfere in the work of other Christian prophets and envoys. Instead, his travels to areas where Christianity was unheard of were intentional, so that he would reach people who had never known of the Messiah. The reference to Isaiah (52:15) comes from the Messianic context of 52:13-53:12, and so Paulus sees the statement, "He will startle many nations" (52:15), as applying to the Messianic work as a whole (and not merely to Jesus' own lifetime). The Messiah was sent to Israel, but through Paulus and other servants to the gentiles, he would wind up reaching many nations, and "kings will shut their mouths on account of him" (v. 15).

So also, I was often hindered from coming to you. But now, since I no longer have a place in these regions but since I have had strong wishes to come to you (from many years ago), I will come to you if ever I should go into Spain. For I hope to go through to observe you and to be sent ahead there from you, if first I should be partly filled with you.

At 1:13, Paulus explained that he had been hindered from visiting the Romans, and here he repeats that point. There is no reliable record indicating that he ever did visit the Roman Christians, nor that he visited Spain, but it is clear here that he was not yet prepared for the trip to Rome that would end his life. His hope here was that if he should be able to take the message to parts of the continent west of Rome, then he would visit the Roman Christians and stay with them until he has enjoyed their company (is "partly filled" with them). But he was not traveling in that direction at the moment.

But now I am going into Jerusalem to serve the holy ones. For Makedonia and Achaia were delighted to make a certain sharing for the poor people of those holy ones who are in Jerusalem. For they are their debtors. For if the gentiles shared their spiritual things, they are bound also to

do religious service for them in physical things.

Therefore, after completing this and after sealing this fruit, I will go out into Spain through you. Now I know that when I come to you I will come with the fullness of the Anointed One's blessing.

The author's plan was to take a famine relief package (1 Kor 16:1-4; 2 Kor 8-9) to the poor Christians at Jerusalem and then return through Rome to Spain. It appears that he was almost finished collecting the foodstuffs and was on his way to Jerusalem. If this was not the case, then the letter may have been written earlier, as early as 53 CE, but as he describes various regions as having donated, it is more likely that the letter was written after his visit to Makedonia.

He praises the gentiles for the assistance that they were willing to provide for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. In addition to granting relief from famine, it appears to have been one of Paulus' aims to strengthen the bond between Jewish and gentile Christians by bringing the free gift of support to the Jerusalem group. History shows that Paulus' efforts met with success only temporarily, for within ten years the pressures from the non-Christian Jews had grown so strong that much of Christianity was polarized by the issues in this letter. By 65 CE, many Jews were refusing to allow (Jewish) Christian writings to be read in their gatherings. Within two more years, Christians were refusing to fight to support Israel against Rome, and by 73 (or 74) CE, the nation of Israel and Priestly Judaism had been crushed by the Roman armies, leaving the rabbis in control of Judaism and a bitter taste in the mouths of both Jews and Christians.

30 *Now, brothers, I advise you through our Lord Anointed Jesus and through the love of the Spirit to strive together with me in those prayers to God on my behalf, so that I would be rescued from those who are unpersuaded in Judea and so that my service which is for Jerusalem would become acceptable to the holy ones, so that I would come to you with joy through God's wishes and would be refreshed together with you. Now may the God of peace with with all of you.*

Paulus' advice is to stick together in love, praying that when he returns to Jerusalem he will be greeted well by his kinsmen there, some of whom were now his enemies. He wished that they pray also that the Jewish Christians in Judea would accept the gift of support sent by the gentiles, which was supposed to ease both the tensions between the two groups and the famine predicted by Agabos (Ac 11:27f., which had begun c. 51 CE).

16:25 *[Now to the one who is able to establish you according to my good message and the heralding of Anointed Jesus, according to the revelation of the secret that was kept silent from the times of the ages but which has now been made apparent, and which (through prophetic writings according to the direction of the eternal God) has been made known for a listening of trust for all the gentiles--to the only wise god (through Anointed Jesus) be the glory for the ages. A-mein.]*

The passage commonly called Rm 16:25-7 is placed here in the NET, which is its location in p⁴⁶, the oldest extant manuscript of the letter to the Romans (a manuscript redated in 1988 to the late first century). The doxology is omitted entirely by three Greek manuscripts. It is found after chapter fourteen in various others. Furthermore, in some manuscripts the doxology appears both after chapter 14 and after chapter 16, or after chapters 14 and 15. The earliest support for placing the doxology at the end of the letter is from Codex Sinaiticus (early 4th century). Since that date

is considerably later than the support provided by p⁴⁶, even though the early papyrus stands alone, the confusion in other manuscripts has led this translator to agree with the earliest form of the text and place the section here.

The good message is Paulus' ("my") because he was given it to teach, and likely also because it had impacted his life so greatly. In telling Paulus to explain God to gentiles, Jesus had revealed "the secret" that had only recently "been made apparent," but which -- as Paulus has shown -- God had planned since the beginning. Therefore, those who read the writings that contained predictions of the gentile mission would realize God's direction of his plan in bringing it to completion by opening the new covenant to everyone.

Paulus recognizes God's wisdom in so doing, therefore labeling him not merely "the only God" but "the only WISE God." Glory to God goes through the Messiah, because it was Jesus who had been sent to reveal that spiritual Torah and gentile mission: "the secret."

Some Parting Greeting Requests

16:1 *Now I commit to you Phoebe your sister, who is also a servant of the assembly in Kenchreia, so that you would accept her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the holy ones, and so that you would present yourselves to her in whatever matter she may need you. For also she has become an outstanding example to many others, even to me myself.*

In preparing to close the letter, Paulus mentions the woman whose privilege it was to carry the letter to Rome: Phoebe. Much has been made of the terms associated with Phoebe, and indeed those terms are relevant.

First, she is a "servant of the assembly in Kenchreia." Kenchreia was a port city near Korinth, and so many have supposed that he wrote this letter from Korinth. The term "servant" is used in connection with several people in the New Testament; for example, Paulus normally refers to himself as a "servant of the Lord" or even as "slave" (which indicates a bond-servant). Phoebe is the only person, male or female, called a servant of a particular group of Christians. Given Paulus' own current preoccupation with delivering food to the poor Christians, this probably indicates that Phoebe occupied the function of the "servant" mentioned in Paulus' first letter to Timotheos and his letter to Titus. It would have been natural for various of the assemblies to have sent people to accompany Paulus, so that they would have a personal hand in helping to feed the poor in Jerusalem. An examination of the [commentary on 1 Timotheos](#) from this series indicates that while Phoebe was certainly equal to any male Christian in this respect, the role of Servant was not a position in the modern sense (of "deacon" or "minister").

Another term applied to Phoebe here is "an outstanding example," which is the Greek word *προσταντις*. The term indicates someone who is "outstanding," and in the definitions of Christian leadership (in light of Mt 20:20-8; 23:1-12; etc.) this indicates that she was a leader -- for a leader in the Christian sense was someone who presented a godly example followed by others. Again, she is equal to any male Christian called a *προσταντις*, or to whom the verb *προιστημι* is applied, but this in no way indicates a position in the modern sense, for such positions did not exist among Paulus' Christians.

Phoebe was such a worthy example of a strong Christian that not only had Paulus entrusted her with this letter, but also the Christians in her hometown had trusted her to accompany their gift to the poor. She was even a good example to Paulus himself! Presumably, Paulus would be rejoined by Phoebe at his next stop on the way back to Jerusalem. No doubt she was a valuable ally to him.

3 *Greet Priska and Akila my relatives in Anointed Jesus. These people laid down their own necks on behalf of my life. Not only do I thank them, but also all the assemblies of the gentiles. Greet also all the assembly at their house.*

Greet Epainetus my beloved, who is a first fruit of Asia for the Anointed One.

Greet Miriam, who labored much for us.

Priska and Akila are familiar names, for they are also mentioned in Acts 18, 1 Kor 16, and 2T 4. Not only were they Paulus' friends, but as others were deserting him, they remained with him to the point of contending equally with him, which put their own lives on the line. Priska is also called by her Latin "diminutive" (pet name), Priscilla, but not in this letter. The fact that Priska's name is always listed before her husband's may very well indicate that she was the stronger Christian -- the one with the better reputation for good deeds; it may also signify that she had a very close relationship with Paulus. This begins Paulus' list of people to greet.

His request to greet both them and the group who met with them is most interesting. Since the couple appears by other accounts to have been based in Ephesus, many commentators have proposed that this section was not part of the original letter to the Romans. It is possible that they had houses in both Ephesus and Rome, for when we meet them in Acts (18:1), they had been traveling from Rome. Others have used this to date Romans prior to Acts 18, indicating that possibly they had been based solely in Rome prior to that time, and this might very well be the case if the letter was not written near the end of Paulus' collection. Still, that does appear to be the case, and so I propose to agree with the plan that they were traveling. Since the Claudian edict was no longer in effect (it lasted less than a year), Priska's family may have returned to visit their home in Rome. At any rate, Paulus valued his friendship with them.

Of the other two we know nothing other than what is written here.

Greet Andronikus and Julia my relatives and my fellow prisoners, who are noteworthy among the envoys, who became in the Anointed One before me.

Greet Ampliatius, my beloved in the Lord.

Greet Urbanus, our coworker in the Anointed One and my beloved Stachus.

Greet Apelles, who is approved in the Anointed One.

Greet those from the house of Aristobulus.

Greet Herodion, my relative.

Greet those of the family of Narkissus who are in the Lord.

Greet Trufaina and Trufosa, who are laboring in the Lord.

Greet the beloved Persis, who has labored much in the Lord.

Greet Rhufus, the chosen one in the Lord, and greet his mother and mine.

The fact that Andronikus and Julia are mentioned together indicates a relationship of some kind. They may have been brother and sister or husband and wife. Either way, Paulus praises their trust in God, for they too had been imprisoned on account of the message. "Noteworthy among the envoys" does not mean "known to the envoys;" instead, "among" indicates that they were part of the group of envoys, and indeed it was the early tradition of the Church that both Andronikus and Julia were known as traveling envoys.

By the fact that they had been Christians prior to Paulus, we know that they had been Jews first. Now they were seeing persecution from their former compatriots -- as was Paulus himself.

The NET has followed the variant reading of **Julia** instead of **Junia** because it appears in p⁴⁶ and other manuscripts and versions. Both are common Latin female names. There was no dispute about the name being that of a woman until the 13th century, when Aegidius of Rome referred to both Andronikus and Julia as "honorable men." Every early commentator, including Jerome and Origen, referred to Julia as having been a female envoy. Only later when this became an issue in the Church did problems arise with the identification of Julia/Junia as female. Some translations proposed rendering the name as "Junias" -- i.e., making it masculine. Aside from going against early Church tradition (which is not an issue by itself), the problem with this proposition -- popularized by Martin Luther -- is that there are no references in the secular or religious Greek of the period to any such name. In short, there was no such name as "Junias." Julia/Junia was a female envoy, but unfortunately we know nothing else about her.

Of the others also, nothing is known, although many presume that Rhufus was one of the sons of Simon the Kurenian (Ac 11:20; Mk 15:21), who may have taken the message of Jesus to the city of Antiochus. There is no proof of this rumor.

Greet Asunkritus, Flegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and those brothers who are with them. Greet Filologos and Berea, and Aoulias and his sister, and Olympus, and all those holy ones who are with them.

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

The Anointed One's assemblies all greet you.

Similarly, nothing is known of the people being greeted by Paulus here, although "Hermas" is also the name given to the second century author of "The Shepherd." The reciprocal greeting ends the section of Paulus' greeting requests. The kiss was a common expression of (Christian) love, and "greet one another" is a way of making sure not to leave anyone out.

Final Admonitions

17 *Now I advise you, brothers, to watch those who are making divisions and stumbling blocks, aside from the teaching that you learned from the Lord. Bow away from them. For such people are not enslaved to our Lord Anointed Jesus but to their abdomens, and through gentle words and praises they deceive the hearts of the simple people.*

Wedge in between Paulus' closing salutations to various Romans and his passing on of various greetings from others who are with him is this brief reminder of the contents of the letter.

"Watch those who are making divisions" was written to point out that those who refuse to accept the convictions of others (and especially the Judaizers) are trouble and should be monitored closely. Thus, he adds "and stumbling blocks" to expressly refer to the issue of convictions, so that not only the Judaizers are intended, but they are the central issue.

The NET (still) reads "abdomens," but John Bland is probably correct in suggesting "penises" for κοιλία. Paulus uses the term elsewhere with that meaning (Filippians 3:19), and it appears with that significance in the Septuagint. The Judaizers are slaves to their penises because they value circumcision so much that it clouds their judgment -- to the point where they are unable to follow the teachings of Jesus. It is not so present here, but in other letters we read that certain of the Judaizers were aware that they were teaching against the teachings of Jesus, but they did so anyway. Paulus merely comments that they were being deceptive and lets it go at that.

*For your listening has arrived as far as all people. Therefore, I rejoice about you. But also, I want you to be wise for goodness and blameless for bad. Now the God of peace will quickly trample the enemy under your feet.
The favor of our Lord Jesus be with you.*

In closing, Paulus praises the good reputations of those Roman Christians who were following the spiritual Torah, saying that the whole Empire had heard of them. It was quite normal to close on a positive note. Therefore, with the author's final warnings to be blameless regarding anything bad and "wise for goodness," he promises them vindication once again during the First Revolt. God would bring peace, but that peace would come in his destroying Priestly Judaism ("trampling the enemy").

Greetings from Paulus' Fellow Travelers

21 *Timotheos my coworker greets you, and Lukius, and Jason, and Sosipater my relatives. I Tertius, who wrote the letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, my host (and the whole assembly's), greets you. Erastus, the steward of the city greets you, and Quartus the brother.*

With his letter now complete, Paulus allows his friends to pass on greetings. One of those comes from his son in the faith, Timotheos, and another comes from his scribe, Tertius, in whose hand the letter was actually written (as Paulus dictated). The closing appeared abrupt to some, and so the earlier doxology was moved to this location. Other Christians composed some closing words of their own, "May the favor of our Lord, Anointed Jesus, be with all of you." The addition first appears in the 7th century, in Syriac.

With that said, these comments are concluded.