

Walking through Romans:
Commentary by Carlos (iggy) Shelton

Walking through Romans: pt1

Romans 1 (New King James Version)

Greeting

1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; 7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul the Apostle had most probably never known Jesus before His death and resurrection. Yet, through an incredible story, Paul who had been on a mission to destroy this new sect called the “Christians” met Jesus in a vision. All this is recorded in the Book of Acts.

Paul is the most prolific writer of the New Testament and to him we owe much as far as to the deeper life we have in Christ Jesus. Romans was really a letter of introduction of Paul to the believers in Rome... There were both Jew and Gentile believers in Rome and history sets them as not getting along that well at all. The Jewish believers saw that they had been chosen by God, and given the Law, and also through them the Messiah had come, so the natural assumption would be that those who came to Christ would also become Jewish converts. In a sense we are about to look into a time in history that division was in the Church as Jew was against Gentiles who had come to the Lord by Grace through faith.

Paul is on his third missionary journey and this is an appeal for money to be able to good onto

Spain. (Romans 15: 33)

The most astonishing thing is that in these very first few verses, Paul is standing against the Cult of Caesar. Paul invokes the prophets of Scripture as a way to point to Jesus' authority to the Jews in Rome, and then to the Seed of David as to Jesus' earthly Kingship. Paul in one sentence hits two nails and set the tone for the letter. In the very next verse Paul tells all that the final trump card is played... Jesus was raised from the dead... to that there had been no person let alone any earthly king who have died and risen from the grave... in that Paul begins the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul pushes the point by using the proclamation made by the Caesar's themselves... "Through Him we have received grace" then once again goes over the head of all Caesars... "apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;"

With that statement Caesar is no longer lord... for Paul has just proclaimed Jesus as the One Whom grace comes to Rome and that empire is one of the nations called of Jesus for Himself.

Paul then opens with his greetings to his brothers, both Jew and Gentile in Rome...

"To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Yes, Jesus is Lord... even in Rome, the center of Caesar worship... in the hot seat of the Beast, Jesus is still Lord of all.

Walking through Romans: Pt 2 Desire to Visit Rome Romans 1:8-15

Romans 1: 8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His

Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, 10 making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established— 12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. 13 Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. 14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. 15 So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

Rome was the hotbed of Emperor Worship. This was the worship of the reigning Emperor starting with Augustus and ending at the time of Constantine. According to Roman Myth Julius was considered a descendant of the gods. With that Augustus pick up with that and ran... declaring himself a god and worthy of being worshiped. This was of course past on from emperor to emperor... which Augustus and Tiberius erected temples to themselves in their own honor.

One, Vespasian was even noted as stating on his deathbed, “I think I’m turning into a god.” The worst emperor of those days had to be Domitian who was referred to as “the Beast” and demanded that the merchants of Ephesus be marked with 666 so that they could buy and sell their wares. It is interesting that there is a great correlation between the temple of Ephesus and the writing of John in Revelation... as the Olympic Games would be held in Ephesus and must of the pomp and ceremony is reflected in the Book of Revelation as John is stating in apocalyptic language that Domitian is not lord, but Jesus is Lord of all... yet we are not in Ephesus now, so I will head back to Rome.

Paul expresses that the believers in Rome being in such a hot-spot are thought of as having great faith. Faith to endure the heavy assault of paganism and anti Christian attitudes expressed by those not of the faith.

Paul hoped as he had visions of Spain to stop in Rome and procure some money for his journey yet also more importantly to share in their faith and impart some spiritual gifts... be that “gifts” as are recorded in other Paul’s writings or merely to add to their understanding of the Gospel in a fuller sense as many had not heard the revelations Paul had received. Paul wanted to impart these gifts to help establish the Church of Rome allowing them to have the Holy Spirit confirm their testimony about Jesus.

This was more that Paul could be with them and be encouraged by their faith as well as encourage them in theirs, than just giving some kind of “gift” to prove them being of true faith. It is a joyous thing to be with other believers. Strangely at times I have come across a fellow believer and “knew” without them saying that they were a believer. They also have said this as we let each other know. In times like that I believe it is the Spirit quickening within us that is rejoicing in the other believer’s presence.

Paul was hindered from going to Rome in the past which I am not sure whether it is known why. We can often make plans even with the godliest intentions yet God will not allow or will delay the plans as they do not fit His plans at the moment. I often wonder at how God has stopped certain plans in my own life, such as my ordination in the denomination I was in when I was a young man. Had I not fallen into the knowledge of God’s Grace I would have entered the ministry at age 24. I wondered at the time when I was a teen as to why God did not let me attend a Bible school in Canada... whose requirements were that I cut my hair short, not listen to “rock music” not even Christian, and to leave my electric guitar at home and just, (if I must) bring my acoustic guitar... I was crushed at the time, yet looking back I see God was protecting me from heavy legalism that I was already heading into,

We do not know the plans of God. We walk and trust as we depend on Him daily to guide us in our walk in Christ. We must know that for whatever reason God does not allow, it is for our best, even the most heartbreaking and disappointing times. He is a Father that loves His children.

Paul states he is a debtor to both gentile and Jew, wise and unwise... I think a better word is

obligated. Paul writes of being “compelled” (1 Corinthians 9:16) to preach. He was The Bondservant of Christ to preach the Gospel to all outside of Israel. His greatest desire of all was to preach the Gospel meaning that Jesus has risen from the grave in the heartland of the earthly emperor and proclaim Jesus as the true and rightful Lord of all.

Walking through Romans Pt3: Romans 1: 16: "The Just Live by Faith"

Romans 1: 16: “The Just Live by Faith”

Romans 1: 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

I know I have already written a bit on this passage, yet still we are walking through Romans.

These two verses alone have had such a profound impact on the Christian faith.

The verse “The just shall live by faith.” is found in three places. First in Habakkuk 2: which is the source in which I believe the best translation is “*Hab 2:4* “Behold, the soul of him is lifted up, and is not upright; but the just shall live by his faith.” Though many translations do not have the word “his” I think the reason that it is not in the NT is that in the Septuagint, it is left out, yet saying that, it is still implied or at least understood that it is faith is a gift from God Himself and that in times of struggles and tribulation, God also gives us faith.

Faith is most misunderstood. It is not a commodity as some teach, nor is it “ours” in the sense as like a muscle we must build up. I was taught as a young Christian that I must exercise my faith to build it up to become stronger in Christ. I have come to realize that such a teaching is actually contrary to the

teachings of scripture. In fact we are to become weaker, or as John the Baptizer stated of himself, Joh 3:30 “He must increase, but I must decrease.” We too must decrease and Jesus must increase. We must become more and more dependant upon Jesus.

Just some interesting sidelines here.

The phrase “*just shall live by his faith*” is used three times in the New Testament:

Romans 1: 17b

Galatians 3: 11

Hebrews 10:38

Each one emphasizes a different point:

Romans faith

Galatians shall live

Hebrews the just

It seems that the Holy Spirit has set a theme throughout the books that hold the most foundational teachings of the Christian faith of the Just shall live by faith.

Some I have found seem to think that faith is seeing. I recently had a conversation where someone tried to use the verses in 1 Jo 1:2 “for the Life was revealed, and we have seen it and bear witness, and show to you the everlasting Life, who was with the Father and was revealed to us, 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare unto you, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

This is a great verse that tells us that John was an eyewitness to the Life of Christ, and that we can trust those who have literally seen Jesus and all His earthly works. Yet this person seemed to want to misuse the passage to say that he himself had seen and heard. He did this as he was telling me I was blind and did not have the light of Christ in me or else I would be able to see the heresy around me... I agree that one must have the light of Christ in them to “see”... and pointed out *his* misuse of Scripture

and that he has not lived at the time of Christ so there was no way he could have seen or heard as John had. (Grin)

So what is faith? Hebrews 11:1 gives the clearest “definition” of faith as being:

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Though I am not one that sees the Rapture as commonly taught as being biblical I do see that the word substance seems to be a bit wanting in this passage. I think the word better used is used by Darby in his translation:

Heb 11:1 Now faith is the *substantiating* of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

For faith is not just a substance, rather it is the confirmation of the things hoped for. It is not that we have yet grabbed hold of what is to come in it’s fullness, rather we have the Holy Spirit in us to confirm that by faith the things that are yet to be will be as God states.

It is like if I looked at a chair and saw that it might hold me yet I will never know unless I have sat in it. I believe it will and believe the builder at his word, yet until I sit in it I am not substantiating the belief in the chair holding me. As I sit in the chair I find it to hold me and the builders words are true. So, also as we walk in faith, we learn to trust God at His word more and more ever becoming more dependent on His Word. His word is confirmed in us. Of course the difference is that the Kingdom though having come has yet to come to its fullness and we still must trust God at His word and the Holy Spirit within leads and guides us in truth and life as we walk. The Spirit is given as proof and confirmation to our spirit that God is faithful. Or as Romans 8: 16 “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.”

So we must walk in faith not by sight as I pointed out to my friend. (2Co 5:7 “for we walk by faith, not by sight”)

With this confirmation of the Holy Spirit that indwells believers we should then have the confidence to proudly proclaim the Gospel. We need not be ashamed as we no longer are depending on

our righteousness but that righteousness of God Himself and as we do we experience the Power unto salvation. It is not just our own, but that of all fallen creation that is even now redeemed and waits only for the Sons of God to be revealed.

Supplement:

The Just Shall Live By His Faith.

This passage in Habakkuk was the inspiration of many of the great Reformers. Luther was one who pondered greatly over its meaning. “Calvin asserted that our salvation is rendered safe and certain through God’s promise alone and that therefore we ought not to seek any other haven...” ([John Calvin Commentary on Habakkuk](#))

The Qumran is very interesting as it seems to be more of the teaching of the coming Messiah. In its translation the word righteous is understood as a person... and that this Righteous shall live by His faith.

I want to be careful here as though I do think Jesus lived a life of faith in the Father, His faith was not to save Him. His was that the Father would be faithful to complete the task He started. This is in a way a faith of God in the sense that God is faithful... In other words I see that we are saved by God’s faithfulness to His word and promises. We get the benefit of both God’s faithfulness and the walking in the faith of Christ. Like Jesus we trust The Father, yet for us that is salvation for us.

Faith’s definition will be debated until Christ returns and sets all things to right and gives us all complete understanding. I see that faith is a bit of a two way street. The main point is God’s faithfulness to us, and then as we respond to His faithfulness in belief, we live in that faithfulness. In that way as scripture teaches even faith itself is a gift from God and not of our own making. (1 Cor 1:9; Eph 2:8-9) On the human level faith is believing even when not seeing... (Heb 11:1)

I see that Jesus is the Righteous One and we live by His faith. His complete trust in the Father is how we too find our salvation. We must depend on Jesus and His righteousness for our own. Romans 4:

4-5 states “Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.”

So many think that they can add works to their salvation, yet in doing that nullify the Cross and Christ’s finished works. It is saying Jesus did not get the job done. By adding works to prove or for some hope that it gives one more standing in God’s eyes, actually makes one less in God’s eyes. For it then must be reckoned with wages. If one rejects Jesus’ Blood for forgiveness, then they stand on their own works which will be paid. The issue is that the wages of sin is death, and if one denies what Jesus did, then they will die in their sin. Even if one’s sins are forgiven and they reject that, one still will receive the due wages of death.

I know I have stated this before, but many do not realize that sin was dealt with before Jesus. It was dealt with by the sacrificial system... What Jesus accomplished was the final sacrifice for sin. Hebrews states that Jesus being our High Priest sat down after the sacrifice. No priest would sit down... for the duties of the High Priest would never be finished, yet Jesus is said to have sat down... This means there is no more sacrifice for sin. (Hebrews 7)

I remember a godly man who once confronted me on this. He asked me a question. “How many of your sins were in the future when Jesus died on the Cross?”... I looked at him and replied, “Huh?” I am not always the sharpest tool in the shed. He stated it again, “How many of your sins were in the future when Jesus died on the Cross?” I looked at him as stated, “I was not born yet so, I would have to say all of them.” He looked at me then and stated, “How many of your sins were forgiven at the Cross?” This time I was a bit quicker... maybe it was the Holy Spirit helping me a bit, I said, “All of them.” And that is the Truth! All of our sins were forgiven at the Cross. Yet so many of us act like our sins were forgiven just when we came to Jesus... you see that would be works... if our getting forgiveness depended on our coming to Jesus, then it is works. Forgiveness is by Grace. Faith is by Grace. We are

saved by Grace through Faith and not of works. We are forgiven already, we need to just walk in that forgiveness and die to our sin! In that way we are Sons of God and God reveals us to all creation as to our New Nature... a redeemed Child of the Living God.

Salvation is a process. It is working out a loving relationship with our Creator on His terms. That is not always easy. We are to depend totally on the Father through Jesus Christ and all Jesus did for us. We are privileged to walk as brothers and sisters with Jesus. We must not forget that we have been cleansed of our sins at the Cross and press on in faith and trust in Jesus for He is also our righteousness and salvation.

Walking through Romans PT 5; Romans 1: 16 – 2: 8

Romans 1: 16 – 2: 8

16. I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17. for in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live

by faith.”

I was told recently by someone who thought themselves rather wise in the Scripture that Paul was only writing to Gentile believers in Rome. I pointed out to him it was written to Jew and to Gentile and in a way as we go through Romans you will see the first 9 chapters are mostly to the Jew, and that is what we see here.

Paul was a task theologian. Many try to make Romans a book or of endless truth and I am not saying these things are not contained within the book, but that was in no way the focus of Paul.

We have seen that this is:

1. A letter of introduction to the Church in Rome as Paul had not been there yet.
2. A missionary letter as Paul hoped to go to Rome and wanted support for those in Rome
3. A letter to clear up “rumors” that had spread about him.
4. A letter to bring an end to the division between the Jewish believers and Gentiles believer that lived in Rome

So, that is where we are now... points 3 and 4. Paul sets this up with verses 16 and 17, The Gospel has the Power to save for everyone who believes. Notice not some, but to everyone. Some believed that since the God had chose the Israelite, given the Law through a Jew, made promises to the Jews and the Messiah had come through the Jews that one must naturally convert to become a Jew to be a true follower of Jesus. It seems reasonable and logical; Yet, Gods ways are not our ways and God had made promises, as we will see later in the book that those who did not seek will find Him.

The main point of Romans is summed up with the phrase: “”The righteous will live by faith.” As we have already covered.

We are now on to a rather long portion of Scripture that if one does not take in one huge chunk, one will come out with only part of the story and in that, will have a rather improper view of God.

The phrase “everyone who believes” is one that if over looked, will also cause one to accept strange doctrines and will cause one to justify scripture to fit his pet doctrines.

Paul never heard of Calvin, Luther, Armius, or any other of the great Reformers. He is cup of the Fountain in which God revealed to us through this gospel that is first to the Jew then to the Gentile. Paul was called to preach to the Gentile and as he did this would first teach at the temple, the most often be tossed out. Then he would go to the market or where mostly women would gather to wash clothes or gather water. There he would also teach and be invited to stay at their house, thus in that way many house churches started.

Romans 1: 18. The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

20. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

24. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

26. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.²⁷ In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

28. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.²⁹ They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips,³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;³¹ they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.³² Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

This passage needs great care for context as one reads through it as with most of Paul's writings. Peter states of Paul:

"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction." (2 Peter 3: 15 - 16)

Peter even states that some things are hard to grasp and this is from another Apostle and one who walked physically with Jesus in His time on earth.

The "wrath of God" portion, is sadly so misused and the point is so often missed... in fact if not taken as intend becomes a passage of condemnation only and not of a promise of redemption. Some have turned this into the anti homosexual passage, and though that sin is mentioned these people often miss that so are "full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice" and are "gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful" and Paul states, "they invent ways of doing evil" and as if it is the worst of all Paul states, "they disobey their parents", which seems strangely out of place in a list of murderers and such.

What most miss is this is not just a list of "sins God hate" for God hates all sin... and that is why

Jesus who knew no sin, became sin... and so sin itself died on the Cross. No, it is not a passage of “sins” but it is much more. For the Jewish believers laid these accusations at the feet of the gentiles. It was common thought that the gentile was not worthy and the Jew, especially those who believed in Messiah Jesus, was now even greater than all. The Jew in general had disdain for the gentile and as one reads in Acts the saga unfolds and Peter argues with God whether what God has made clean is clean or not! We find in this passage Paul stating that yes “these” people, without saying “gentile” deserve wrath... and the Jew hearing this letter would be going, “AMEN PAUL PREACH IT BROTHER ISRAELITE!” and yes those who do such things do deserve the wrath...

Yet, we will come to the blow of the “velvet hammer” as N.T Wright calls it soon. There is more that is missed in this passage.

The issue is not these sins; it is at least two matters that are often overlooked.

1. God has revealed Himself to all through creation.
2. Having made His Glory clear, men thought better to worship creation.
3. Man’s wrong thinking lead to wrong worship.

God has created Himself in His creation, and man can see the Glory of God. As I grew up I was fascinated with the Beartooth Mountains and I still am. To me it is one of the most beautiful areas in the world. I feel close to God in those mountains. I think someone has to be blind not to see God there, yet many just see it as a pretty place to camp, fish and hike and in a sense worship nature. In this we find that man who was the greatest of all God’s creation, has lowered himself below lesser created things and bow low to worship... man has worshiped the creation instead of the Creator. Man knew God yet chose his own way of thinking, he exchanged the Truth for a lie and forsook God’s Glory to worship created things. Instead of acknowledging their error even though they could see it they not only did it more, but encouraged others to do likewise.

Now, still the Jew would be going, “Yes, those Gentiles those “others” are wicked and deserve

their due punishment... and thank God I am not like them.” Yet, there is more as Paul is not done here as some seem to teach or think as we must finish the thought that Paul started... and in Chapter 10 we see Paul not strikes the blow of the “velvet hammer”:

Romans 2: 1-11

“You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God’s judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be God “will give to each person according to what he has done.”

To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism.”

You see so many stop before chapter 10, and miss the punch line, as Paul now gets to the meat of what he was getting to. “You, therefore, have no excuse you who pass judgment on someone else”... To judge another as the Jewish believers were doing and they themselves also did those very things, made them just like the Gentiles.

God’s judgment is based on truth. For He is Truth itself... and man suffers from “their thinking

became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Other versions state “You, O man..” and in the Greek we find it to be “mankind”... Paul set the Jewish believers up... and then showed them that “those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile”.

God does not play favorites... and being a Jew does not give one any better standing than being a Gentile... in fact we will see later that it may mean more judgment the more one knows... yet we will also see that in turning to God it will take more humility and in that more Grace will come to those who think themselves wise in their own eyes and later find they are not...

Even as a Christian, to think we are “better” than those who are not, we miss the point Paul is making... to judge others by our own standard of “goodness” or “righteousness” we will find that we are only their equal... or worse in need of more Grace as we miss the kindness of God toward us and to them... in that to show God’s goodness and kindness, to show His mercy and Grace, His tolerance and patience’s to others... we minister to others all this so that they will see God’s kindness and come to repentance. Otherwise “you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance.” There is not place for prideful arrogance toward others and those who deem themselves greater than others will become less and are in danger of storing up the wrath of God against them...

Again, many get this all backwards, they stop at the end of chapter 1 and think themselves better... and in that find only their own judgment... Remember in verse 17 we read of true righteousness is revealed by God through the Gospel:

“...a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by

faith.”” It is through this same kindness from God, we receive Grace, and respond in faith, we are to recognize that this same faith that we are saved through sustains us... It is not our faith in the sense that we on our own merit bring it out of ourselves, for even faith itself is a gift to us from God... so this same faith that saved us, sustains us from first to last... by Grace and Mercy... to the Glory of God!

Walking through Romans PT 6: Romans 2: 11 - 29

Romans 2:11 For there is no partiality with God. 2:12 For all who have sinned apart from the law

will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.

2:13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous before God, but those who do the law will be declared righteous. 2:14 For whenever the Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature the things required by the law, these who do not have the law are a law to themselves. 2:15 They show that the work of the law is written in their hearts, as their conscience bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or else defend them, 2:16 on the day when God will judge the secrets of human hearts, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus.

2:17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relationship to God 2:18 and know his will and approve the superior things because you receive instruction from the law, 2:19 and if you are convinced that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 2:20 an educator of the senseless, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the essential features of knowledge and of the truth – 2:21 therefore you who teach someone else, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? 2:22 You who tell others not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 2:23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by transgressing the law! 2:24 For just as it is written, “the name of God is being blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

2:25 For circumcision has its value if you practice the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. 2:26 Therefore if the uncircumcised man obeys the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 2:27 And will not the physically uncircumcised man who keeps the law judge you who, despite the written code and circumcision, transgress the law? 2:28 For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision something that is outward in the flesh, 2:29 but someone is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart by the Spirit and not by the written code. This person’s praise is not from people but from God.

God does not play favoritism:

God does not play favorites though He does choose us by Grace through faith. Yet, to think it is that we are “good” misses the point of the Law. While one who is not under the Law or “apart from the Law” who sins will still be under judgment, one under the Law will also be judged. To one reading they might ask, “What good is the Law?” If it does not help to be under the Law, then how does it help one?... The answer is that whether one has heard the Law or not does not mean anything... it is he who does the Law that will benefit from it... yet... there is still an issue.

The Jewish believer in Christ in Rome saw that they had an advantage as they had the Law and regarded the Gentile believers as lesser as they did not. Because of this they felt the Gentile must come under the Law as they were to receive the benefits... and in that they must first convert to Judaism then come to Jesus.

The issue was though, that the Jewish believer had the Law and could not do it... and the Gentile by the Holy Spirit was keeping the Law as it was now written on their hearts.

In Ezekiel 36:26 God promised “I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your body and give you a heart of flesh.” In that the Gentiles received this promise in Christ Jesus. “They show that the work of the law is written in their hearts, as their conscience bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or else defend them, on the day when God will judge the secrets of human hearts, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus.”

This was a bit confounding to the Jewish believer as they had Christ yet still held to the Law that was written on stone... Paul admonishes them that since they are the trusted ones of this Law, why do they not keep it... or rather understand it?

The Jewish Laws held that it was wrong to divorce yet a divorce was rather easy in those days. The Law also taught that no one should steal, yet since the Gentiles were not “chosen” and were the

“others”, a lesser than human... it was deemed not a sin to enter their temples and plunder them. Paul was stating, stealing itself is a sin regardless of whom one is stealing from. In these things the Gentiles looked at the Jew and saw him as a hypocrite... and stated, “the name of God is being blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you”.

May we not fall into categorizing others as lesser than ourselves. That be it the Religionist or the Righteous we are all in need of Jesus... equal by our sin and fallen state... and equally worthy of the wages of sin... Death.

So being a Jew outwardly has no value if one does not live out the teachings of the Law. In such the person who is not circumcised yet keeps the Law will look at the person who is circumcised and think that that person is lesser as he knows what to do yet chooses not to.

No, one is not a Jew by the physical removing of the foreskin as one is not a “Christian” by any physical works... it is only by the Holy Spirit who cuts one heart... that leaves it raw and sensitive that makes one a Jew, as well as a Christian. We are not made a believer by the “written code” as some teach... but by the Holy Spirit.

Walking Through Romans PT 7: Romans 3

Romans 3

3:1 Therefore what advantage does the Jew have, or what is the value of circumcision? 3:2 Actually, there are many advantages. First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God 3:3 What then? If some did not believe, does their unbelief nullify the faithfulness of God? 3:4 Absolutely not! Let God

be proven true, and every human being shown up as a liar, just as it is written: “so that you will be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged.”

3:5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is he? (I am speaking in human terms.) 3:6 Absolutely not! For otherwise how could God judge the world? 3:7 For if by my lie the truth of God enhances his glory, why am I still actually being judged as a sinner? 3:8 And why not say, “Let us do evil so that good may come of it”? – as some who slander us allege that we say. (Their condemnation is deserved!)

3:9 What then? Are we better off? Certainly not, for we have already charged that Jews and Greeks alike are all under sin, 3:10 just as it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one,

3:11 there is no one who understands,

there is no one who seeks God.

3:12 All have turned away,

together they have become worthless;

there is no one who shows kindness, not even one.”

3:13 “Their throats are open graves,

they deceive with their tongues,

the poison of asps is under their lips.”

3:14 “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

3:15 “Their feet are swift to shed blood,

3:16 ruin and misery are in their paths,

3:17 and the way of peace they have not known.”

3:18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 3:20 For no one is declared righteous before him by the works of the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

3:21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God (which is attested by the law and the prophets) has been disclosed – 3:22 namely, the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 3:24 But they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. 3:25 God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith. This was to demonstrate his righteousness, because God in his forbearance had passed over the sins previously committed. 3:26 This was also to demonstrate his righteousness in the present time, so that he would be just and the justifier of the one who lives because of Jesus’ faithfulness.

3:27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded! By what principle? Of works? No, but by the principle of faith! 3:28 For we consider that a person is declared righteous by faith apart from the works of the law.

3:29 Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles too? Yes, of the Gentiles too! 3:30 Since God is one, he will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 3:31 Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! Instead we uphold the law.

What a privilege that the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. To them the promises, the workings of God and the very Seed would come through. It was the assertion of some... no the accusation that if the Jew being the caretaker of God’s written word did not come to faith, then God is a

liar... That God had failed and His is not worthy. This is of course a lie from the pit of Hell as it actually proves God is Just and faithful. It shows that ever man is a liar and God alone is true...

“Let God be proven true, and every human being shown up as a liar, just as it is written: “so that you will be justified in your words and will prevail when you are judged.”

It shows that man even given the truth will still not see it or respond. One needs to have God reveal Himself to you in order to be seen.

Some had began to teach that if God is glorified by our sin as He is shown to be more merciful and to give more Grace that we should go and sin even more... Some even claimed that this was Paul’s own teachings. Paul of course never taught this nor as we see in this passage saw that, yes God is glorified by His mercy and Grace, yet that is not so that we will keep on sinning...

Paul again refers to what he has already shown that man is not righteous. That man is sinful and needs salvation. Fallen man will always try to justify himself before God. He will come up with all sorts of reasons God is not Just in His verdict. Even from the grave man will shout out that God is a liar and that man is not.

If one is under the Law there is no excuse... so to try to make excuses God only needs to point to the Law and let one know where they fell short. In fact that is the reason for the Law... to show our sin even more magnify it even greater.

In that we stand needing salvation from ourselves. We need to turn to God in faith for this salvation. In that we have been justified freely at the Cross... we need to accept this forgiveness that has been given. Some state that forgiveness comes now... which it does, but forgiveness was given to all at the Cross. All our sins were in the future and in that all sins have been forgiven. That is the reason to not turn in faith to receive God’s salvation is such a horrific thing as one is denying their own forgiveness already granted and then deny the Holy Spirit that will give then New Life...

God gave His Son in our place to fulfill His Justice and to be the Justifier. In that we stand

justified, and can walk in its fullness if we receive the Resurrected Life of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Again, if one is a Jew or Gentile we cannot boast in anything we do... we cannot justify ourselves but must only rest on the Justification of God. For once we have been justified; we can now live by faith...

Walking through Romans pt 8: Romans 4

Romans 4:1 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? 2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” 4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, 6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

7 “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,

And whose sins are covered;

8 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.”[c]

9 Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. 10 How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. 11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, 12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14 For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, 15 because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all 17 (as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; 18 who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, “So shall your descendants be.” 19 And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. 20 He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. 22 And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, 24 but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25 who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

“We are children of Abraham!” stated the Pharisees, yet Jesus stated’ “For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones”. So what makes one a child of Abraham? Faith in God.

Works do not make us righteous or “right with God”. Paul’s sense of humor shows as he states”... if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.”

We are to believe on Him who justifies the ungodly. In that a man who has finally come to the his end of either running away from God, or depending on his own works and believes in God is then accredited as righteous by his faith. It is said that in order to solve a problem one must first recognize he has a problem. In that moment humility happens. Running away from God or working to prove oneself to God seem as it should as act of futility.

Humility is the first contact of Grace which then faith can come.

The outward works of righteousness as in the case of Abraham come afterward in the sign of circumcision; the outward workings for us today should be the same. Our “works” are not “ours” but the outward sign of God in us working out of us to His Glory. As with circumcision a part of us must die so the signs of the Glory of God work through us and that is pride.

We have no righteousness except what is imputed to us by Christ Jesus. What a wonderful thing to know God is not keeping a list of wrong against the believer. (1 Cor 13)

The promise to Abraham was not through the Law and as that was over 400 years yet to come. If it was to be so, then God’s promise would be voided and He would be a liar. The promise to Abraham was well before the law and very one –side. So actually, “very” is a gross understatement. The covenant was all on God’s part and Abraham was fast asleep when God passed through the sacrifice! Abraham brought nothing and added nothing so Grace would enact Abraham’s faith.

This Grace that brings faith gives us hope. Even when everything seems to be contrary to hope God gives grace to more faith and more hope! So even the promise to have a child or an heir, then to leap to be a father of many nations, Grace, Faith, and hope build even sight unseen. For Abraham only saw his sons born, yet the nations he never saw.

Now, it was not Abraham’s faith that made the promises come true, rather it was all the faithfulness of God to His own promises. We are to not strive, but rest in these promises that Jesus was delivered for our sins and raised for our justification. Notice this is the fullness of the good News, that Jesus was delivered for our sins and raised for us to be made right with God. We must accept the whole message of Christ’s death and resurrection in order to be able to receive the fullness of God’s promises.

[Walking through Romans pt 9: Romans 5](#)

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 5:2 through whom we have also obtained access by faith into this grace

in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God's glory. 5:3 Not only this, but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 5:4 and endurance, character, and character, hope. 5:5 And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

5:6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 5:7 (For rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person perhaps someone might possibly dare to die.) 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 5:9 Much more then, because we have now been declared righteous by his blood, we will be saved through him from God's wrath. 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life? 5:11 Not only this, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.

5:12 So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all people because all sinned – 5:13 for before the law was given, sin was in the world, but there is no accounting for sin when there is no law. 5:14 Yet death reigned from Adam until Moses even over those who did not sin in the same way that Adam (who is a type of the coming one) transgressed. 5:15 But the gracious gift is not like the transgression. For if the many died through the transgression of the one man, how much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ multiply to the many! 5:16 And the gift is not like the one who sinned. For judgment, resulting from the one transgression, led to condemnation, but the gracious gift from the many failures led to justification. 5:17 For if, by the transgression of the one man, death reigned through the one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ!

5:18 Consequently, just as condemnation for all people came through one transgression, so too through

the one righteous act came righteousness leading to life for all people. 5:19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of one man many will be made righteous. 5:20 Now the law came in so that the transgression may increase, but where sin increased, grace multiplied all the more, 5:21 so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

One of the outward signs of a believers walking in Faith is peace. As we read before it is Faith and faith alone... and that itself a gift from God that we must walk in... This Faith is by Grace as we humbly come to the end of our own works. We found that all men are sinners and equal in the sight of God... in that we all need to be Justified by Christ... and now having had that happen at the Cross we are a peace that enables us in joy.

Yet, there is something so many miss... and that is we also rejoice in suffering.

Rejoice in suffering?

Yes... we can now see past this worlds agony that our suffering is of nothing. Now, in Christ Jesus suffering makes sense and in fact to a true believe is welcomed as a sign God has deemed us worthy of such... worthy that He desires us to grow...

“Suffering produces endurance, and endurance, character, and character, hope.” From this Faith from Grace Hope is given... and to walk in that Hope we must endure suffering to build our character. What a privilege from God to walk in this Hope by the Faith he gives.

Many spend time condemning the “sinners” yet they have not learned or have forgotten that Jesus died at the appointed time for the ungodly... and that was you and me... it is all people. To think that somehow one can come to Christ then condemn other sinners who have yet to come to the end of themselves and fall at the feet of Jesus seems to miss the many parables that taught of one who has been forgiven, then goes out to forgive. One forgiven of a great debt should humbly forgive others of

such minor debts in comparison.

We have been reconciled by Jesus at the Cross... it is His works alone that matter to God. In that we can rejoice at this reconciliation that by ourselves could not have ever happened. Through one man, Adam all have become sinners. Some teach sin is literally passed through the loins of Adam, really as I read and re-read Romans I cannot see this... in fact I see that Adam the first man, sinned... and death entered to all creation not just man. So, to say that sin is passed on from generation to generation by the lineage of the "man" does not tell us why all creation is cursed by death also.

In the writings of Irenaeus, he speaks that man can choose good and evil... and by choosing good God is pleased, yet the issue is not that man is totally depraved, but that man being a moral agent cannot sustain his morality... He at sometime will slip from morality to immorality... in that God not being in the equation man will strive by his works to discipline himself to build character only God Himself can build in a man.

Adam was not "perfect"... if he had been he would not have eaten the forbidden fruit. For perfection is to be absolute... not partial... and Adam we do see has eaten and we being mankind does die.

I see if Adam had not eaten and continued to walk with God in the Garden and learn and grow, he may as Jesus was been made perfect (Hebrews 5). Yet, Adam being imperfect chose to eat of the fruit leaving all creation in a very sad state.

Jesus was that second Adam... though He Himself was born of the Spirit. Jesus was able to overcome the tragic doings of the first Adam and in that reconciled all creation to Himself... "For judgment, resulting from the one transgression, led to condemnation, but the gracious gift from the many failures led to justification."

Jesus was and is this Gift... this Gift of Grace that God gives. We depend on Jesus and we find that we now do not strive in our own obedience but rest totally in Christ Jesus' obedience. "For just as

through the disobedience of the one man many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of one man many will be made righteous.” We are made righteous by the obedience of the “one man” who is Jesus Christ.

Paul writes that the Law was given so that transgressions would increase... that to heap more coals on mankind so that we can see our error and in desperation turn to God... in that as sin gives way to death from transgression, even more so Grace should reign now through Jesus Christ.

Supplement:

Chapter 5 of Romans has to be one of my most favorite chapters in the entire Bible... From it I found a way to walk in Christ. I have written much on this chapter so I may not go into some of my own favorite parts as deeply here as I might wish to. If you desire to read more on this here are a few more links on this passage.

[Link 1](#)[Link 2](#)[Part 1](#)[Part 2](#)[Part 3](#)

Walking Through Romans PT 10: Romans 6

Romans 6:1 *What shall we say then? Are we to remain in sin so that grace may increase? 6:2 Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 6:3 Or do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 6:4 Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too may live a new life.*

6:5 For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be united in the likeness of his resurrection. 6:6 We know that our old man was crucified with him so that the body of sin would no longer dominate us, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 6:7 (For someone who has died has been freed from sin.)

6:8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 6:9 We know that since Christ has been raised from the dead, he is never going to die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 6:10 For the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. 6:11 So you too consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its desires, 6:13 and do not present your members to sin as instruments to be used for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead and your members to God as instruments to be used for righteousness. 6:14 For sin will have no mastery over you, because you are not under law but under grace.

6:15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Absolutely not!

6:16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or obedience resulting in righteousness? 6:17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves to sin, you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching you were entrusted to, 6:18 and having been freed from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness. 6:19 (I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.) For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

6:20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free with regard to righteousness.

6:21 So what benefit did you then reap from those things that you are now ashamed of? For the end of those things is death. 6:22 But now, freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your benefit leading to sanctification, and the end is eternal life. 6:23 For the payoff of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am always amazed when people say they agree with Grace, yet then undersell Grace as they fear that it will lead to someone having a “license to sin”. Some slanderously attacked Paul saying that he was teaching one could just keep on sinning. Paul of course makes light of this in chapter 3 verse 8. Of course this was just that, slander... and even today I find that there are those who say about me that I am also against “doctrine”, or do not teach “holy living”.. which if one understands Grace, and has realized their identity “in Christ” they will find they desire less and less the “sinful desires” of the flesh, and desire more and more to become “transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which

comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (2 Cor 3:1)

Here Paul states very clearly again, that are we to keep sinning in order that this grace abounds? Of course not... more...if one reads it in the Greek I am told that Paul is stating this very empathically... it would be more like saying, “HELL NO!” (Hope that does not shock one too much.) Paul then points out that we are dead to sin... and if that is true... how can one dead to sin, still live in it?

We have been baptized into Christ... now water baptism represents this spiritual truth. Just as we are placed in the water, then put under, they rise out again... which is the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and that we to are now dead, buried and resurrected in Christ Jesus... With this imagery... we are “placed/immersed” into Jesus’ death, buried with Jesus and now resurrected as a New Creation.

Paul goes on to show that since we have come to the end of ourselves... or our very death of trying to please God by our own works, in that we died... Since we can then identify with Christ in His death, we also can now identify with Him by His resurrection.

If we die, we are free from sin... think about that. A dead man is not subject to the sinful desires of the flesh... nor is a dead man out to do works to prove his own worthiness to God! He is dead. At that point it simply is too late to do anything to change that simple fact... dead is dead... now comes the Judgment! (Hebrews 9:27)

So all a dead person can do is hope for to be resurrected... and judged and in that there is only the Hope of Jesus for our eternal Life. So the logical flow is that since we died, so we also live in Christ. Notice this is not living our own life... but something has happened. We have exchanged our “free will” as far as it was free to choose good and bad, yet one was not able to sustain that choice without falling. This free will is not subject to Christ in our surrender to His works. Our “free will” has died! We are a New Creation, behold the old is gone! (2 Cor 5:17)

So as we died in Christ, so now we Live in Christ through His resurrection. Jesus died once for

all... some try to teach the false notion that “all” means “some”, yet in all my studies I have not seen “all” mean anything but “all” even in the Greek! I find in the Greek this word to mean “upon one occasion”... as far as the word is one word to our “once for all”... The argument is pretty silly to me if one argues that it is not once for all but once for some... for we see that it is in the one occasion that Christ died on the Cross... He did not die more than that, nor did He die less... to say He died for only some misses that very point... Hebrews also talks of this “once for all” that Jesus offered Himself for “people” once and for all. These people are not as some teach some “special” people... if one looks closely at the type of people the writer of Hebrews talks of they are “people in general” as opposed to “of ones own populace”. What I am getting at is that some teach that Jesus died only for the “elect” and not for everyone. Yet, scripture itself teaches contrary to that notion very clearly. So, one has to twist the passages of Scripture to fit their doctrinal bent in order to have scripture prove their doctrine. I see clearly taught in scripture without resorting to Greek that Jesus died “once for all mankind”. In that all men are equal as they sin for they will die, and now in Christ all men are equal as it is by Grace through faith that man now finds eternal life in Christ Jesus.

Now, as one come to understand more and more or the truth of this and one’s identity in Christ, they will find that being dead, sin as no more hold on us, nor is it employed by the body as it was. Since now death is not the enemy, but has become the Christians greatest friend, we seek to live out the truth “to live is Christ, to die is gain!” (Philippians 1: 21)

We were at one time slaved to sin... so say a man was truly “free” though he had free will, misses that man was also a slave to sin. For we served sin no matter how hard we tried, and always fell short the Glory of God. Freedom was there, yet our own chains kept us bound to our own death. No matter how close we came to our own perfection, death still always won.

Now, though as one is in Christ, sin has been conquered at the Cross. Death has no power over us as Jesus holds the keys to Death and Hades. Yet, even now for all our free will we are given the choice

that we must lay it down and no longer pursue our own way, but come to that end of ourselves and in that Jesus breaks the chains of bondage and truly frees us... to be slaves to righteousness!

This though is where the real freedom comes. That we can not grow in the Grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. As we grow I see will one day be clothed in perfection as Jesus is now. Till then we must trust (I am sure we will always even then need to trust) but even more as we do not see and must walk in faith.

As we walking in the Righteousness of Christ we are sanctified... this is not some “process” in the sense we get more and more “holy” as God has declared the believer as holy already. It does mean that we learn and grow as Jesus did. We learn to walk not in our own strength but in the Power of God... (I am not talking about that Benny Hinn type of “power”) This power is that of Love which has flipped the entire creation on its head.

Paul’s greatest question/statement in this passage that should strike any believer:

“So what benefit did you then reap from those things that you are now ashamed of? For the end of those things is death.”

For all the pleasures we have encountered... all the riches we have collected, all the power this world has to offer... man still dies. Great or small, weak or strong... we all die... “For the payoff of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Walking through Romans pt 11: Romans 7

Romans 7:1 Or do you not know, brothers and sisters (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law is lord over a person as long as he lives? 7:2 For a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of the marriage. 7:3 So then, if she is joined to another man while her husband is alive, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she is joined to another man, she is not an adulteress. 7:4 So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you could be joined to another, to the one who was raised from the dead, to bear fruit to God. 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful desires, aroused by the law, were active in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. 7:6 But now we have been released from the law, because we have died to what controlled us, so that we may serve in the new life of the Spirit and not under the old written code. 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! Certainly, I would not have known sin except through the law. For indeed I would not have known what it means to desire something belonging to someone else if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” 7:8 But sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of wrong desires. For apart from the law, sin is dead. 7:9 And I was once alive apart from the law, but with the coming of the commandment sin became alive 7:10 and I died. So I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life brought death! 7:11 For sin, seizing the opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it I died. 7:12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good. 7:13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? Absolutely not! But sin, so that it would be shown to be sin, produced death in me through what is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful. 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual – but I am unspiritual, sold into

slavery to sin. 7:15 For I don't understand what I am doing. For I do not do what I want – instead, I do what I hate. 7:16 But if I do what I don't want, I agree that the law is good. 7:17 But now it is no longer me doing it, but sin that lives in me. 7:18 For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For I want to do the good, but I cannot do it. 7:19 For I do not do the good I want, but I do the very evil I do not want! 7:20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer me doing it but sin that lives in me. 7:21 So, I find the law that when I want to do good, evil is present with me. 7:22 For I delight in the law of God in my inner being. 7:23 But I see a different law in my members waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that is in my members. 7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

In Romans chapter six, Paul ends with the thought, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) Here Paul picks up the point that if one is under the Law, then the Law is Lord over them until they die. In that manner Jesus cannot be the Lord of one if they are under the Law... you cannot serve two masters as Jesus stated in the Gospels. Just as with a woman bound by the law of marriage commits adultery if she divorced her husband and he still lives. (I am not going to go into the ramifications of this as far as the topic of divorce... as each person must walk in the Grace God gives them.) Yet, if the husband dies, so the law is nullified and she is free to marry another. I do not think Paul is making the case that it is a sin to divorce. I think that even under the law of Moses, God knew the hardness of man's heart and allowed it, though He hates divorce... to me this shows the love and compassion of God rather than the strictness of the Law... yet still if one is under the Law, the law is Lord... and if the law is lord, it is without mercy, grace, or love... it is just to be followed and obeyed.

We are dead to the Law if we are in Christ. What a wonderful thing that is. We are dead to the law and to sin. If we are under the law we find that we only face our death... and in that “the wages of sin is death”. Many miss that it is not that our sins being forgiven is the part that we enter into Christ... without His death of course there is not forgiveness, yet without His resurrected Life we do not have Life.

The Law only points out our sin as if under a magnifying glass... we can see our sin even clearer under the Law... and it should lead us to the place of recognizing that we are in need of salvation from death... not our sins. In that as we have died to “what controlled us”... that Lord called the law... and we now have newness of Life in Christ Jesus. Before we came to the end of our own works... which only bore fruit unto death, now we bear the Fruit of God.

Is the Law sin? Paul states this as some seemed to ask that if sin leads to death and the Law leads us to death is the Law also sin? And Paul states very clearly “NO!” and then states again that the Law exposed our sin. And that was its job. The job is to show that we are utterly sinful. The Law was given to show that we are sinful... Paul states that covertness was in his heart. Before the Law he did not see this was there... in his mind he was alive... yet when he came under the law... he realized he was dead. Sin came to life in his heart and death also entered his heart... “So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good.” It holds the standard that is required for holiness, righteousness and goodness... and we fall flat into our grave.

The Law itself is good... it reveals our own sinful heart as it teaches us how perfect we must be to please God... and we should recognize that we cannot please God by our own works. We are as one sold to sin as a slave. The last few verses propel us into Chapter 8... yet before we get there I hope we can just meditate on the point were Paul has brought us... we are wretched people... We cannot get good “right” as all our good turns to evil no matter how hard we try... Sin in us is a hard master and we without Jesus are but slaves to him... The law leads us to the conclusion that we need salvation... to

come to the end of ourselves and cry out... WHO WILL SAVE ME!!!!???

But, there is good news! “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” For it is by Jesus we are saved and by His Holiness we are made holy. As we live now we are saved by a good and clean conscience before God, yet our body will still die. Yet we hold to hope to come in the Resurrection of our bodies.

Romans 3:21 – 26 a closer look at forgiveness

Romans 3:21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all[h] who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (NKJV)

I know I am doing the series on Romans, yet the other day someone was asking a bit on my position that we are all forgiven but that does not mean we are all saved. This view is traditionally known as universal atonement. This is not the same “Universalist reconciliation: though I see that all creation has been reconciled is what the scripture teaches. (Romans 5:10) Yet, I do not see that because all have been forgiven or reconciled that all will be eventually saved... I think that that is a logical leap that comes from not understanding the difference between the Cross and the Resurrection and what they accomplished.

All mankind was forgiven at the Cross... all the past sins and in that moment all sins from that day on would also be forgiven. If this is not true then no one's sins are forgiven unless Jesus goes back to the Cross for each and every one of us. Hebrews states this in chapter 9: 11-15:

11. When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. 12.

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. 13. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! 15. For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance--now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

This is the end of the Old Covenant which entered us into the New Covenant which was promised in Isaiah 28: 15 – 18:

“You boast, “We have entered into a covenant with death, with the grave we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place.”

So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.

I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place.

Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the grave will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it.”

Isaiah 42:6-9 is a fascinating passage that runs parallel with Romans 3 it states:

“I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. “I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols. See, the former things have

taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.”

And what are the new things God declares? Well that is what the bulk of Isaiah is about!!! Yet we rest on this verse in Jeremiah 31:31-34 to show the how He will do this.

“The time is coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, ” declares the LORD.

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

The writer of Hebrews also alludes to this passage.

Hebrews 8:10 “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”

Hebrews 10:16 “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”

This is the New Covenant. We are no longer under the Old and subject to death if we turn to Jesus. Forgiveness is given at the Cross... it was given once for all... here is a quick study on the verses that use this phrase.

- Romans 6:10

The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

- Hebrews 5:9

and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

- Hebrews 7:27

Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

- Hebrews 9:12

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

- Hebrews 9:26

Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

- Hebrews 10:1

[Christ's Sacrifice Once for All] The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

- Hebrews 10:2

If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

- Hebrews 10:10

And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

- 1 Peter 3:18

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

Jesus died once for all mankind... He did not die over and over for everyone as they come to Him for forgiveness which is what some teach without realizing that they do...

The question I ask is this... If Jesus died once, then all sins are forgiven, past the ones present and the future ones to come... how many of your sins were future in relationship to the Cross?

The answer is obvious. All of them would be future to the Cross. The Cross is a fix place in time that lasts eternity. So, the logical conclusion is that all sins are forgiven. Yet, we then still have the problem of salvation. Yet, that comes with the Resurrection of Jesus.

Romans 5:8-11:

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”

When we accept that we are forgiven at the Cross and then go to the Living Jesus of the Resurrection we find in that reconciliation... we are then reconciled. The door of heaven has been thrown wide open, in that moment we are saved through His Life.

People miss this in its very simplicity, yet without we have a partial Gospel. We only have a dead Jesus on a Cross... who dies for us every day over and over so that we can be forgiven... and that is not what God intended. He gave His Son “once for all” at the Cross so that we could no longer have to fulfill the covenant with death Adam signed. The Covenant of Death no longer binds us, unless we stay committed to it even though it no longer holds us. This is like a wife who clings to her dead husband and carries him around and insists she is still bound to her marriage... it is sick and it only glorifies Death. God glorified Himself in His Son, so that we could have Life. The old is gone, the new has come... and I say Glory!

Supplement:

I have written a bit about this in my post called; [~ emerging thought in Montana ~: Universalism:](#)

[Why I do not agree](#)

[Walking Through Romans pt 12: Romans 8: 1-25](#)

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 8:2 For the law of the life-giving Spirit in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. 8:3 For God achieved what the law could not do because it was weakened through the flesh. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 8:4 so that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

8:5 For those who live according to the flesh have their outlook shaped by the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their outlook shaped by the things of the Spirit. 8:6 For the outlook of the flesh is death, but the outlook of the Spirit is life and peace, 8:7 because the outlook of the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to the law of God, nor is it able to do so. 8:8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 8:9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this person does not belong to him. 8:10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is your life because of righteousness. 8:11 Moreover if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit who lives in you.

8:12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh 8:13 (for if you live according to the flesh, you will die), but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live. 8:14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. 8:15

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery leading again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father.” 8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God’s children. 8:17 And if children, then heirs (namely, heirs of God and also fellow heirs with Christ) – if indeed we suffer with him so we may also be glorified with him.

8:18 For I consider that our present sufferings cannot even be compared to the glory that will be revealed to us. 8:19 For the creation eagerly waits for the revelation of the sons of God. 8:20 For the creation was subjected to futility – not willingly but because of God who subjected it – in hope 8:21 that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage of decay into the glorious freedom of God’s children. 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers together until now. 8:23 Not only this, but we ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies 8:24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with endurance.

There is a lot to cover here in this chapter... so I will be cutting it in half. We ended in chapter 7 with this thought:

“Romans 7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”

The main purpose of chapter seven was to bring us to the end of our “self”. We come to the point of recognizing that we are doomed sinners... and though we thought the Law would save us, we found it only revealed more of our sin!!!! We are caught in a “body of death”. This is the same “covenant with death” that Isaiah talked about in Isaiah 28: 15 – 18:

“You boast, “We have entered into a covenant with death, with the grave we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place.”

So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.

I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place.

Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the grave will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it.”

We are dead... that is the wages we pay for sin... our own death. Yet, the Good News is Jesus Christ! Now we serve the Law of God with our mind and serve the law of sin with our bodies. This does not mean we go out and just enjoy sin with our bodies, but that before our bodies ruled our minds... pleasure is the greatest thing the body desires. It is an incredible pleasure seeking machine!

Now in chapter eight Paul begins to explain the “how” we are no longer a slave to sin! Though he stated it in Romans seven clearly, he is breaking it down more for us here.

Here we are trapped in a body of flesh... this earth suit that we walk in on earth. God designed in beautifully and as David says in the Psalm, “fearfully made”. Yet, it is that we in our minds can see “good and evil” and even desire to do “good” we still cannot keep a sustained “good” as we fail and fall into the evil.

Once one realizes that when we are not in Christ there is no condemnation one is free of sin!!! This allows a new focus and direction moving from “self” to the “other” or more so now, a focus on the Eternal One. This is actually more than just a focus as that implies that “we” are the center. Jesus Christ now has become the center if one comes to Him and then enters Him and He in them.

Many talk as if we must master the flesh... in a sense we must, yet it is in the how of that where

many miss the main point. They will run to “self help books” or counselors, (both which are fine, but don’t think they are the “answer”) they will go to pastors or friends or TV or radio talk shows... all In hope to see if they can become better people... but that is like putting turtle wax on a dead man’s bones... we just get a shiny dead thing. It might look pretty, smell better or whatever but it is dead.

In Christ we have New Life. This Life is not originating from us but from God Himself through Jesus. You see, God condemned and killed the flesh in Jesus at the Cross. Our flesh still fights against God in that it is corrupt and is condemned so that the Law is fulfilled... That means my dear Brothers and Sisters that we still will die... and yet even some teach that Christ will return and we will rise in our bodies, yet we will be transformed in a twinkling of an eye! (1 Cor 15:52) So, at the moment our corrupt perishing bodies will be changed to glorious new ones! The perishable changed to the imperishable! The flesh is condemned in its fallen state, yet we live in Christ Jesus!

Yet, here we are now... learning to live as New Creations still trapped within these corrupt bodies. In that we must learn to live by the Spirit and not by the flesh. I see that this can only be learned as there is still a contrast between the fallen nature we have in the flesh and the redeemed nature we share in Jesus so what we think about is the important think... Do we still think of how to fulfill the desires of this corrupt body or do we now seek something much richer? As we walk in the flesh we come to know only death, yet as we walk in the Spirit we find Life. The flesh seeks its own so cannot seek the things of God.

Now, be careful that we do not fall into the trap of Gnosticism where we see the flesh as evil and that we must kill it... or tame it or whatever... the flesh is already judged and condemned. Yet, God made these bodies. We are redeemed and even these bodies as corrupt as they are still Gods! We are to give them to Him as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). We now bear in us this reconciliation of the profane and the sacred or the marriage of the Holy with the fallen.

This is the importance of the incarnation... that the Holy God became a man... clothed in flesh as

we are, yet born fully alive. The Holy God came to earth to redeem us, in that Jesus “appeared” as we do, yet being born fully alive from heaven was able to overcome sin. What an amazing plan that was!

Now, we are not condemned as we are not just our bodies... sin is condemned in us. John states it this way:

1 John 3: 3-6:

“Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.”

The Scripture is clear here, “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, this person does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is your life because of righteousness.” In Christ Jesus you are already dead to sin as your body is already dead!!!! Yet, the Spirit is YOUR LIFE. We have no life but Christ Jesus when we are in Jesus.

We are adopted in to His family... we are now Children of God... God has now become our Father.

Now, we come to the idea of suffering which is lost on most Christians today. With all the “good life” or “name it and claim it” or “blab it and grab it” mentality it is hard to understand that we now must partake in the sufferings of Christ as part of our walk. That can vary from persecution of others because you are a Christian to dying for Jesus on the mission field. In all of it we suffer for a Name... this wonderful Name of Jesus. Yet, ever in our new focus is this new found glory we have in Jesus... We may suffer now but the Glory to come is much greater and in that we must place our vision and ever press forward.

You see this world waits as a woman who is about to give birth... with moans and groans knowing that great love is to come, must bear with the pain for a time and pass through it to enter into that state

of motherhood. Creation too waits for the revealing of the Sons of God because in that it too has its redemption.

Now many think “getting saved” is all about going to heave... and that is very sad and rather a selfish view. In fact by our redemption all creation is redeemed also... and in that we are revealed, Creation is restored!

Many also place their faith in their own understandings or in what they can see... if they can read it and understand it then they place their faith in it. This can be a part of gaining insight, yet really it is in that we do not see that we have true faith... it is in not yet seeing our Hope we have Hope! If you can see it then it is not Hope... but to walk in the trust of another’s word, that is Hope that their word is true and able to give you all they have stated.

In that we must endure in this Hope so that we can one day see it in all it’s Glory!

Walking Through Romans pt 13: Romans 8:18 - 39

Romans 8:18 For I consider that our present sufferings cannot even be compared to the glory that will be revealed to us. 8:19 For the creation eagerly waits for the revelation of the sons of God. 8:20 For the creation was subjected to futility – not willingly but because of God who subjected it – in hope 8:21 that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage of decay into the glorious freedom of God’s children. 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers together until now. 8:23 Not only this, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we eagerly await our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 8:24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he sees? 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with endurance.

8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how we should pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings. 8:27 And he who searches our hearts

knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes on behalf of the saints according to God's will. 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose, 8:29 because those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 8:30 And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.

8:31 What then shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 8:32 Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, freely give us all things? 8:33 Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 8:34 Who is the one who will condemn? Christ is the one who died (and more than that, he was raised), who is at the right hand of God, and who also is interceding for us. 8:35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 8:36 As it is written, "For your sake we encounter death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 8:37 No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us! 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I believe that suffering is something that most Americans do not relate to. To many think that the cable TV going down or not having a hot shower in the morning... or running to late for work that you can't stop for a latte is suffering. Yet, saying that there is a suffering deeper in the heart of man that many may cover with such things.

Paul's sufferings were both physical and mental as he was often on the defense of his teachings, and even of his very life as some sought to bring him down in some way even at times subjecting him to

stoning.

Some countries the physical sufferings we here cannot fathom... yet in all this, Paul states that “our present sufferings cannot even be compared to the glory that will be revealed to us.” This Glory is Jesus Christ Himself.

Because of man who gave over his dominion of the earth and creation as a whole to Satan, the creation cries out in its own suffering. We often do not think of the creation as suffering yet Paul states: “the whole creation groans and suffers together until now” What more we too groan in these bodies of decay, and hope for the Resurrection where we will receive new imperishable bodies.

Many place their faith in the idea that we can understand through rationalizing and science proves God’s word. This places God’s word in subjection to the process of science. Science itself is not bad, yet if one uses it to prove God I see something wrong. It is like saying that man is capable of understanding God if he gathers enough info. It is saying that God is not beyond mans finite mind and mental capacities and placing ourselves as equal if not above God.

If one then believes the Bible then as he does research finds once again God’s word to be true, then science in subject to God’s word. The contrast to all of this though is the understanding that it is Hope we are saved. It is the Hope that in placing our faith in the finished works of Christ Jesus we find salvation. We do not see this at present, or at best may get a fleeting glimpse that passes in a moment. Yet, we who place our hope in Jesus press forward in this hope with endurance until this hope is fulfilled.

Paul goes one that in the same way we press on in endurance by hope we also do not know how to even pray. As one who is so far from perfection we must depend on the Holy Spirit to interpret our own inward groanings. As the Holy Spirit does this He intercedes on our behalf. It seems God has thought of everything doesn’t it?

As we are in Christ Jesus, the Father works His will and purpose and works all things together for

our good.

God knowing that there would be those who would be in Christ, also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. God also by making Jesus the firstborn of the New Creation, now has made a way that we also will be brothers and sisters born into this same New Creation we have in Christ Jesus.

Before we were predestined we were called. In that we either answer “No.” or “Yes”. We must come to the point where we have not where else to go as the disciples stated to Jesus (John 6:68).

I see that many miss this and struggle for years to realize this crucial point, that we are dead in our sins... and as we come to Christ, we place our sins in Christ and our dead in Christ, but alive by His resurrection and given New Life.

As we walk forward in perseverance, we walking in Hope... this Hope is Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:13) Yet also in this calling and do His will and good works, we find that we are justified. Justification is not a one shot deal at the Cross... as we are given Grace, Mercy and Love to give away, we also are given Justice to give away.

Our God is for us. Many suffer from bad teaching that tells them that “God hates sinners” and if a person is honest, they know they are sinners. If a person listens long enough to this sort of bad theology, they then begin to not live in victory, but focus on their own fruit. They do not realize that all men are bad trees and thus bear bad fruit. It is God alone who bears Good Fruit as He alone is the Good True. By listening to the lies, they become in bondage to a performance or shame based faith. They fall from grace to works and again if honest enough find they no matter how hard they try, they will always fall short.

That is why it is crucial to understand God’s Love. God is for us. If God justifies a man, who can say God is wrong? No one can condemn you because Jesus sits by the Father and intercede for you. I think Jesus trumps everyone else in this game. It is this great love for us God has. Nothing can separate us from it. In Christ we are secure and immersed in the greatest love of all.

Never let anyone tell you that God hates you because you sin... It seems that God loves sinners most of all. For He loves them so much that He sent His Son to die in their place. All in hope that we come to trust God in His love for us and find true comfort from our sufferings and even more that we grow into the image of Jesus.

Walking through Romans part 14: Romans 9:1-13

Romans 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit— 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. 5 Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! [a] Amen.

6 It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. 7 Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 8 In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. 9 For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

10 Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. 11 Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: 12 not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." 13 Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

This will be interesting as I do not see that I can cover this chapter all in one swoop. In fact this

chapter is so widely misunderstood that it may take the reader a bit to go over this so see my perspective. I will only be building on the theme that was coming out of Chapter 8 in how we are comforted by the Love of God and that we are to live life by the Spirit. It is God Who justifies and who can condemn you then? (Romans 9: 1-6)

That not all that is called Israel is “Israel”, gave Paul great sorrow as he saw the people of his own bloodline not seeing that it was “by the Spirit” we live and that it is God who justifies. In this he models Jesus in the willingness to lay down his own life so that his brothers would be spared. For it was through this chosen people that God gave us the Messiah Himself. (Verses 7- 9)

It would seem that Paul knew that some would say then that God failed. That since the natural born Jew is not able to fulfill all that was required even with all that God had given to and through them. Yet, again it is not of the natural birth one is saved... but of the Promise. God said, “At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.” This coincides with the prophecy that YWYH God will return to Israel. It is that this promise of God returning and a Son is born...

Paul makes the point more clear that it is that one is born of God by the Promise and not of the flesh by pointing out that Esau and Jacob had the same father yet, God loved Jacob and hated Esau. (Verses 9 – 13)

I have taught a couple of places on this so I will not go into it now but please check out [this post](#).

Now, I have heard some go one and on that this passage is about “Nations” and then the other rebuttal that it is “individuals” and I say it is both.

Of course Jacob and Esau are individuals.

Yet, both went on to be Fathers of Nations.

As I pointed out in my post on “Esau I hated...” it is clear that the direct quote comes from the passage in Malachi 1:2-3 and it is definitely about nations, yet also in the story of Esau and Jacob, they are individuals and we see that God may choose a nation but he also chooses by Grace, individuals.

I will point out that God promised Sarah that “at the appointed time” she would have a son, so also Jesus came “at the appointed time” (Titus 1:3) and God revealed His Light through Jesus Christ. Now, interesting also is that the “younger will serve the older” I see that this as possibly the two covenants in that the Old Covenant of the Law is now over ruled by the New Covenant and the Law of Love. Yet, there is a great significance in that Esau will also serve Jacob.

The Moabites are the descendants of Esau and few realize the [“Herod was also a descendant of the Edomites.”](#) In that Herod also represented Rome. So on two levels Herod was the enemy of the Jew. This was part of the reason the Herod desired to be called King of the Jews as it would be the final victory for him as a descendant of Isaac. Yet, the issue is that the “blessings” were passed on to Jacob and not Esau.

Also in the story of Esau and Jacob, Jacob sought after the blessings and birthright and Esau cared nothing for his birthright trading it for food. This is important to realize as I will point out later.

Paul speaks that is by Grace so that “11Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: 12not by works but by him who calls” .

It was decided that Jacob and his descendants would carry the faith of Abraham. Though neither was yet born it was God’s decision to choose Jacob, so that His purpose of election might stand.

Many seem to think election is about individuals, yet if one looks closely at the passages in Ephesians concerning election, in chapter one versus 4-5 we read:

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will...”

Now, as I have talked to Calvinists I have heard them tell me over and over that this means “they” existed “in Christ” before the creation of the world... I do not see it that way. I see that God purposed “in Christ” that His plan of salvation would be done through Jesus. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the

only Immortal (1 Timothy 6: 13-16) yet, it seems that Calvin taught that man existed before creation. Some try to say Paul is saying that, yet I see that Paul is simply stating that by His Grace that “those”, meaning a people whom God chooses, not necessarily individuals, will come to Jesus and be placed “in Christ” and be saved. To say somehow the “us” (which is plural btw) is about individuals... misses that though God will choose the individual, man was yet to exist and to exist in any form is more in line with Gnosticism and Mormonism.

To say that somehow man pre-existed is negates scripture:

John 6:46

“No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.”

1 Timothy 6: 13-16

“In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.”

Roman 2:7

To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. (Note that Paul only refers to the future and not that they had any pre-existence.)

I Corinthians 15: 51-54

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that

is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

(Notice that it is after the mortal is exchanged for the immortal that what is written will come true.)

To say that man somehow “pre-exists” is like I stated more in line with Mormonism and the Gnostic teachings of the Plermora and that man is somehow part of the [aeons](#) (eternal beings). Man is not an eternal being he is a created being. To state that man existed “in Christ” is to go against the clear teaching that man is not an eternal being and is mortal.

The Mormons teach that man is eternal. Here is their view.

“We believe in a God who is Himself progressive, whose majesty is intelligence; whose perfection consists in eternal advancement — a Being who has attained His exalted state by a path which now His children are permitted to follow, whose glory it is their heritage to share. In spite of the opposition of the sects, in the face of direct charges of blasphemy, the Church proclaims the eternal truth: ‘As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be.’” (LDS Apostle James E. Talmage, Articles of Faith, Ch.24, p.430 - p.431, LDS Collectors Library ‘97 CD-ROM)

“‘It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God,’ the inspired word continues, ‘and to know that we may converse with Him as one man converses with another, and that He was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did.’ The Father is a glorified, perfected, resurrected, exalted man who worked out his salvation by obedience to the same laws he has given to us so that we may do the same.” (LDS Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, p.64, LDS Collectors Library ‘97 CD-ROM)

God is not a uniquely eternal being. All spirit is self-existent matter and is eternal (without beginning or end) . Such “matter (called intelligences) sometimes becomes organized into a spirit being through birth to celestial parents. Then that spirit is born through human parents on earth. Like

all people, God took this course and eventually reached Godhood. God would stop being God if intelligences stopped supporting him as God. (D&C 93:29, 33; Abraham 3:18-23; Mormon Doctrine, 1977 ed. p. 751)

Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29)

Here is one Calvinists take:

Though I will point out that more well read Calvinists reject the “pre-existence of man”, many do hold to this doctrine as biblical.

To quote one I debated recently with where I pointed out that man would have to pre-exist in order to be “in Christ” as many teach or explain this passage.

“Iggy,

you wrote out Ephesians 1:4-5 and you can’t see election in it?

Then you say that the focus of that passage is not “us” but “in Him”.

So what is Paul saying about being in Him?

What or who is in Him? It is “us”. The focus is “us” in what Paul is saying and that we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world What you say Calvinists believe about being in Christ before He has even lived, been crucified and buried and resuurrected is true.

Yes, even before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit! You say, “What a Calvinist does without realizing it is making mortal humans who have not even been created, be known before they are even created.

”No, the Calvinists are not doing this without realizing it. They are believing this with all they got!

Must be that tricky little passage of Ephesians 1:4-5. Yep, that’s the cause of this “terrible”

belief!”

Now some Calvinists do reject this and they should... but it seems they give no answer as to how we existed in Jesus without actually existing... Also, I might point out that I do see “election” taught in the Ephesians passage yet not in the way that this person was stating. Also, she needs to read a bit more of Calvin to see that even Calvin rejected her view.

“By saying that they were “elect before the creation of the world” [Ephesians 1:4], he takes away all regard for worth. For what basis for distinction is there among those who did not yet exist, and who were subsequently to be equals in Adam? Now if they are elect in Christ, it follows that not only is each man elected without respect to his own person but also certain ones are separated from others, since we see that not all are members of Christ.” (John Calvin Institutes III:22:2)

Yet some I have run into do believe this teaching and it is simply a heretical view.

Now, from what I see Calvin actually teaching I think is closer to what I believe, and many Calvinists twist at what I state and do not realize it pretty much what Calvin stated himself.

I see that the “election” was purposed that those “in Christ” would be saved. The “us” is about those of that “election”. It is not about the pre-existence of man in any way.

Here is the bible’ teaching regarding this:

Man is a finite being, not an eternal one. The first man Adam was created at a specific point in time (Gen 1:26-27; 2:7; 1Co 15:45-49). Man did not exist in the beginning when God was creating the universe, for if he had, God’s question to Job would have made no sense (Job 38:4).

Now, I see that God knew Jesus as Jesus was in the Father and that all things were made through Jesus. In that “things” did not exist before creation, God purposed a plan of Salvation “in Jesus Christ” that those who would believe and receive would be saved. The “us” Paul is referring to is those that were then in Christ.

Jesus died and rose at a specific point in time and that was the “appointed time”.

The mystery hidden that is Jesus Christ was not known to man until it was revealed. Now, man was known by God, and that “some” would believe and receive Jesus was also known... as well that some would reject the Call and be lost. Now, this sounds close to Calvinism... yet I see that the point of focus is Jesus... and not the elect. Our focus is to always be Jesus.

We are only to verse 13... and this is already a bit too long. So this will be done in two posts... hopefully. LOL!

[Cleck here for more thoughts on predestination.](#)

Walking through Romans: pt 14 Romans 9:13 - 33 p

Romans 9:14 What shall we say then? Is there injustice with God? Absolutely not! 9:15 For he says to Moses: “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” 9:16 So then, it does not depend on human desire or exertion, but on God who shows mercy. 9:17 For the scripture says to Pharaoh: “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may demonstrate my power in you, and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.” 9:18 So then, God has mercy on whom he chooses to have mercy, and he hardens whom he chooses to harden. 9:19 You will say to me then, “Why does he still find fault? For who has ever resisted his will?” 9:20 But who indeed are you – a mere human being – to talk back to God? Does what is molded say to the molder, “Why have you made me like this?” 9:21 Has the potter no right to make from the same lump of clay one vessel for special use and another for ordinary use? 9:22 But what if God, willing to demonstrate his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath prepared for destruction? 9:23 And what if he is willing to make known the wealth of his glory on the objects of mercy that he has prepared beforehand for glory – 9:24 even us, whom he has called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? 9:25 As he also says in Hosea: “I will call those who were not my people, ‘My people,’ and I will call her who was unloved, ‘My beloved.’”

9:26 “And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

9:27 And Isaiah cries out on behalf of Israel, “Though the number of the children of Israel are as the sand of the sea, only the remnant will be saved, 9:28 for the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth completely and quickly.” 9:29 Just as Isaiah predicted,

“If the Lord of armies had not left us descendants,
we would have become like Sodom,
and we would have resembled Gomorrah.”

9:30 What shall we say then? – that the Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness obtained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith, 9:31 but Israel even though pursuing a law of righteousness did not attain it. 9:32 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but (as if it were possible) by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, 9:33 just as it is written,
“Look, I am laying in Zion a stone that will cause people to stumble
and a rock that will make them fall,
yet the one who believes in him will not be put to shame.”

Is God unjust by His Mercy and Compassion and who He gives grace to? Certainly on the surface it would see that it is unfair. Why would some, who have strived to show they are followers of God, not be chosen in the end? Why would some be chosen as if by random and without any rhyme or reason? We are left with the feeling that we have a capricious God who really does not care for righteousness nor does He care for man’s worship. He will just do as He pleases, and if He be a man, would be selfish in His doing so if not considered mad.

Yet, this is not the case as if God chose us on our own merit, or if somehow we gained favor from Him in something we did, we would still need to address that these men are righteous on their own without God. For you see God is Right and is The Just. If man could satisfy God’s required perfect holiness, then they would be gods themselves and in no need of God.

Now, Paul has already stated that all have sinned, (Roman 3:23) and that no one is righteous, (Romans 3:10) and so has set the foundation of this revelation in that we are dead in our sins... and that there was only One who was Just, and the Justifier... God through Jesus Christ.

Now many miss that Mercy is how God shows His power as God speaks of this as He spoke to Moses and Paul brings it up now. “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” We also find God chooses to show His power as He can soften the heart of some and harden the heart of others. Yet, it seems that as we look back in Romans 1 we see that this hardening is that man had the knowledge of God but forsook it.

“For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened.” (Romans 1:21)

Man still chooses the direction of his heart but it is God who either draws man to himself or hardens man’s heart and they are turned over to the futility of their thoughts and vile worship of created things.

It is not that God response to man’s heart in its own turning but that if one turns away they are hardened... and all men have turned away. Yet, by grace God has mercy and softens some men’s heart... and in that moment grace breaks down the barrier and the heart of man turns once again to God.

Man can ask why God made him this way... yet still many peoples theology teaches that God made some people bad and some to be saved by Grace. The truth is in Genesis where man as part of creation was declared “Good” (Genesis 1: 31)

So man originally made good turned away as in that his heart was hardened. God did not make any man “evil” or any man to be tossed into the fire. He did not create some to just partake in wrath. Man was made and was declared good, then sinned and then was condemned to receive the wages of sin... which is death. In our sinful state we are condemned to death.

Now from a purely human perspective God seems to have made some to be vessels of wrath and some to be vessels of destruction. And because of “sin” all men are vessels of destruction. God did choose the Jews as if by random to display His mercy and grace. They did nothing to be chosen though

that seemed to be lost to some as they took God's favor as earned because they kept God's law. Now, God did bless them for keeping the Law, yet it was not for their salvation that the Law was given as the Law gave no provisions for salvation or forgiveness of sins. Sacrifice was needed for forgiveness of sins, yet all men still went to the grave... for all men still died even if forgiven by the blood of bulls and goats. Now, it was for forgiveness that the blood of bulls and goats was demanded, yet, that blood never nor could take away the sins of a person... only cover, yet, we find Jesus' Blood takes away the sins of a person.

Hebrews 9: 11-14

“When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”

Jesus did more than atone for our sins He took them away as the prophet John the Baptist stated in John “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29).

Hebrews 10: 2-12 also shows more that the sins are taken away not just covered.

“If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.

Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll— I have come to do your will, O God.’”

First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.”

God’s provision for sin is complete and for all. For by this grace that is Jesus who was sent to take away sin, was born also as a man, a vessel of wrath, learned obedience even unto death and so overcame death. We must now realize that we also must be born of heaven to live. It is in this new birth as we come to believe and receive Jesus, become the children of God... the same children of the Faith of Abraham. It is in this that Jesus is our Eternal Father, yet also being the first fruit of the New Creation, is our brother.

Now, God is willing to display His wrath on man, yet even more He wants to show His compassion. God chooses to endure those so deserving of wrath with patience... remember it is all of us that are deserving of His wrath...

In this patience, we find that there are those who are vessels of mercy. These vessels of mercy have not earned their title. In fact many thought that they were these vessels and called the “others” who they deemed not chosen as the vessels of wrath as dogs or even less than human. Many of the Jews believed that they were in God’s favor simply because of their birthright of being dependences of Abraham, yet Paul, sadly states that “not all those who are descended from Israel are truly Israel” (Romans 9:6) Yet, now we find the punch line... as some seem to twist this chapter to mean that God created some for wrath and some for destruction and in that negate the truth of creation. Men are created to be the image of the Living God. Man was created “good” and fell from this “goodness” and

forsook it for a lie. To state that some were created for the purpose of destruction cuts across man being created to be the Image Bearer. Now, this punch line is that the very ones that were deemed dogs and vessels of wrath, are now as the Prophet Hosea states: "I will call those who were not my people, 'My people,' and I will call her who was unloved, 'My beloved.' (Romans 9:25)

Now, one might ask if then the Children of Israel are all lost if God has now turned to such favor on the Gentiles... Yet, Paul states there is a remnant.

Now, here I see that to state that God made some to be tossed into the fire is a lie. God desired none should perish... (2 Peter 3: 9). Yet sadly there are some that will refuse to exchange the lie for truth.

God is merciful. He is Just. Those that were given the Law missed the purpose of the Law which was to reveal their sin and make them cry out to God for salvation. Instead they took the Law as a way to salvation. They sought to gain God's favor by works and not by faith. They stumbled over the "Stumbling Stone" who we find out is Jesus. This Rock was given so that we would ALL fall and in that put our faith in this Rock and not perish or be put to shame.

The punch line is that by Jesus God flipped the very thought that some are created for destruction and some for wrath on it's head. God planned before creation that in Christ Jesus all would have a way of salvation. Yet, again, sadly though all will hear the Calling, not all will be chosen as they will not believe on Christ or receive the Life of Christ that gives all men salvation. Some will be lost and instead of be lifted up, will stumble but all will have to face the "Rock" that is Jesus Christ.

Walking Through Romans part 15: Romans 10

Romans 10: 1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel[a] is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

5 For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." [b] 6 But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" [c] (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 7 or, "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" [d] (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" [e] (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." [f] 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." [g]

14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent?

As it is written:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, [h]

Who bring glad tidings of good things!" [i]

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?”^[j] 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18 But I say, have they not heard?

Yes indeed:

“Their sound has gone out to all the earth,
And their words to the ends of the world.”^[k]

19 But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says:

“I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation,
I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.”^[l]

20 But Isaiah is very bold and says:

“I was found by those who did not seek Me;
I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.”^[m] 21 But to Israel he says:
“All day long I have stretched out My hands
To a disobedient and contrary people.”^[n]

Verses 1 through 4:

Paul speaks of the issue that the Jews faced concerning their misunderstanding of the purpose of the Law. I see today that this still is an issue for many who mix Law and Grace and form a pseudo righteousness that is based on their own understanding, but not from knowledge.

Paul states that these live by this false righteousness in hope that the Law will bring about a righteousness that will save them, yet, true righteousness only comes through Christ. (For Christ is the

end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.)

Many today also do not understand that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness... they confuse the truth by mixing in the law with Christ. This is not much different than if they confessed Christ as savior and then went to give a sacrificial animal to atone for their sins.

There is a righteousness that comes from the Law, but it is not in the blind obedience to it. In fact it is in the understanding that we are not right as we reflect on the Law, that we see God's Righteousness and none from us. This is the "righteousness of faith" that the Law is to produce. Obedience does not produce righteousness as all righteousness come solely from Christ Jesus alone.

Note Romans 5: 18-19

"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also ***by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.***"

It is not by our own obedience we are made righteous. I have been in many churches that call for sinners to be righteous or holy. If one understands that one has no ability to be these, then one can only truly trust in Christ as one's own righteousness.

If one confesses that Christ lives, He lives in them. With the heart, one believes. In this belief is Love. Out of the flows the confession of the mouth that brings the righteousness of Christ on the person who now believes. It is belief in action and is the response to the gift of faith.

Faith comes by hearing... or does it?

First off here are a couple of verses many are familiar with...

Romans 10: 17 (or the part they always quote) faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”

Now I have heard this quoted so many times and often when that happens what is being said in scripture is often mistaken. One instance of this is:

Matthew 18: 20. “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”

I have heard this used for prayer and to say that it only takes two to have “church”. Yet, if one really looks at the context it is about reconciliation. As before this is said, Jesus is talking about confronting who has sinned against you. Then following it Peter asks how many times we are to forgive someone who has sinned against you... Yep there it is in the context of confronting and forgiving sin... and nothing about prayer or corporeal worship.

In regards to this I was thinking first about the emerging conversation... I have been studying a bit on the word “logos” as it developed and was used in the times of Jesus. I see in its idea that of being a conversation... or as the Baptist theologian Gordon Clark taught that it is the idea of “Word”, and “words” in a rational form.

Gordon Clark believed that when one was regenerated (born again/made a new creation) then they once again become connected to the “mind of Christ” and became once again the “image of God”... Of course this is a two sentence summary of his view so it will not do him much justice, but suffice it to say, I see he is missing some fine points... but I will save that for another post on that topic. The point here is this is not a unique idea that I just pulled from the air that the word “logos” could be translated

as Clark did, as:

“In the beginning was Logic, and Logic was with God and was God.”

Again, I think Clark misses some finer points, as I see it is not just “logic” but a flowing of a continued conversation from Genesis to the conversation becoming Flesh in the Person of Jesus. With that major segue; hearing does not always lead to faith...

Matthew 13:13 “This is why I speak to them in parables: “Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.”

Romans 10: 13 - 20. “...for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.” And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me. Paul states that faith comes by hearing... and yet states that the Hebrews heard and did not believe. Then he even says the same question again, and points out that the Jewish people heard and understood the message... yet there was no belief!”

Now if that does not make you wonder a bit then you are missing what I am stating here so re-read it again...

In the end Paul summarizes a passage from Isaiah... “And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.”” It seems these people are *not even trying to listen* and God reveals Himself to them!!!!

So it is not just in the preaching that people respond... The idea that it is about us preaching and saving people is not really the case... If one is really looking at what is being said, it is that Jesus will reveal Himself to them... meaning that out of Jesus revealing Himself, or calls one to Himself then, “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”

Please notice Whose “word” it is. It is not our cleverly developed arguments, nor our powerful logical assertions. It is not in how we expound and wax eloquently over our favorite passages of Scripture... for then salvation is not purely of Jesus, but we then are taking that glory due solely to Jesus for ourselves. No this is what Paul meant as he stated:

1 Cor 1: 17 – 31 “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.”

Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

I think one of the most egotistical thing a Christian can say is, “I saved someone.”, as if they could have even saved themselves! No, a person is completely at God’s Mercy and Grace... and as they respond they are saved.

Now, am I saying that preaching is of absolutely no value? Am I saying that logic or reason, or assertions or “propositional truth” or whatever is of no value... in a way yes! None of that will save you... only Jesus saves someone. Yet as we live out our lives... and we partake in “Christ in us”, we will see Christ Jesus at work in and through us.

In fact you will use all the tools as stated, yet in that it is Jesus doing His Father’s work in and through you... it is not of our works... or else we could stand before God and state, “did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?” For then we could justify ourselves by our works before God... yet if we do that, His response will be, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” (Matt 7) So beware if you think *YOU* are doing anything for God...

We are to rest in the Sabbath Who is Christ Jesus... He put an end to our works and we are to rest solely on His perfect works... just as before and up to the Cross and now after the Resurrection we are commissioned... For we are sent on the mission of proclaiming Christ in us our hope of Glory and that He is Risen and the Kingdom of God is here! In that God will finish that work and purpose He is doing

in you... and through you, by Jesus Himself.

Walking Through Romans: pt 16 Romans 11

Romans 11

1 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 3 “LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life”? 4 But what does the divine response say to him? “I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” 5 Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. 6 And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.[c] But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. 7 What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8 Just as it is written: “God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day.” 9 And David says:

“ Let their table become a snare and a trap,
A stumbling block and a recompense to them.

10 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see,
And bow down their back always.”

11 I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. 12 Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! 13 For I speak to you

Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. 15 For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? 16 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." 20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. 22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. 23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? 25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

“ The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
27 For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.”

28 Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. 29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. 30 For as

you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, 31 even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. 32 For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

34 “ For who has known the mind of the LORD?

Or who has become His counselor?”

35 “ Or who has first given to Him

And it shall be repaid to him?” 36

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

In [chapter 10](#) we talked about the purpose of the Law. Here we see that since we are not saved by the Law... nor are we saved by being a Jew, the natural question would be, “I say then, has God cast away His people? “

Paul is quick to state that, “Certainly not!” In fact this is so emphatic of exclamation that it may be taken as swearing in the original language... simply stated being, “Hell no!”. The point is that Paul is stating that God has not forsaken the Jews.

Now we must proceed carefully here as if one does not read this passage with great care there are many errors that one can come away with.

- Foreknowledge being more that the bible refers to.
- Election being more than the biblical definition.
- That works are part of keeping salvation.
- That “right belief” saves us.

These are some of the errors I have encountered that people use this passage to promote their

errant teachings.

Yet, the truth is that we see that Paul refers to “His people whom He foreknew” meaning the Jew. And out of this there is a remnant that come from the faith of Abraham. We must be careful not to add to the scripture concerning “Foreknowledge” as if we do, we can enter into the misunderstanding that some are chosen on a personal basis meaning, that as an individual, God chose you to be saved. Now, there is some truth to that, yet, we see that Election is not about the individual, but about the Jew and Gentile becoming one man.

If one takes a look at Ephesians 2 you will see Paul teaching just this.

“14For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.”

We see here in Romans that Paul is taking that same thought throughout this passage. God foreknew the Election of the remnant... the Elect is the New Man made of the two being Jew and Gentile.

The issue then arises that though God “Chose” the Jew, and now also “engrafts” the Gentile and rejects the Jews for the sake of causing them to become jealous, that the Gentile not become prideful. For if the Jew was cut off (note not all as some are preserved as a remnant.) The Gentile then might become prideful and state, “, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.” Which Paul states, “Well said.” Yet, if one then assumes as a Gentile, just as the Jew did before him, that because God now chooses the Gentile that all is well, pride can raise it’s ugly head and God can just as well cut of the Gentile. In fact there will be a time that this will happen. When the age of the Gentile is complete God

will cut off those who did not come to Him in faith. Paul states in verse 25 “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”

Again if we read this as an “individual” it may sound like if we do not “continue in His goodness” which sounds like one might be able to lose salvation. In fact this is quite the opposite as Paul is reassuring that we the “Elect” are saved by grace and not by works. Even more we see that Paul’s assurance of God’s ability to save even those who have fallen. We see that though the Jew has fallen away, that he also may be grafted on again if he does not persist in unbelief.

Walking through Romans: pt 17 Romans 12

Romans 12: 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. 20 Therefore

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

If he is thirsty, give him a drink;

For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

We left off in Chapter 11 talking about that no one has given to God that God need repay them. It is that all things are from God and that is absolutely true when it comes to salvation. Though the Jew for a time has hardened his heart, thus receiving “blindness” from God, the Gentile now received open eyes for an age so that a many as can be saved will be saved.

Because of this Paul calls us to give our mortal bodies as living sacrifices. No longer living in a way to satisfy its desires, but to now live as though the body was placed on an altar. I have heard of some that state that the difference between the OT sacrificial system and the NT system is that The Lamb was slain that took sin away, allowing for us to place our own being, on the altar before Jesus to offer each of us as a living sacrifice unto God. In this as we lay willingly down acknowledging our own death, we become a fragrant aroma unto God “For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who

are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?" (2 Corinthians 2:15-16)

Genesis 8: 20 -22 "Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done" As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."

Being like the OT sacrifices we now also have the promise of never being destroyed. Instead we are promised the "renewing of our minds" so that as we live as living sacrifices we prove that God's will is also as He promised... "good and acceptable and perfect".

No one has come into the Life of Christ without the gift of faith. It was by Grace faith was dealt to each of us. God has a purpose for each one of us. We are called the "Body of Christ" and realize that we are dependant on Christ Jesus as our Head. Here we have diversity and unity in action. We are One Body, yet many Parts of the same Body. I see this much like the Trinity itself. Unified, yet Each Person unique and with a specific purpose again acting as One in that same Purpose.

Some teach the gifts of God or at least some of them have ended, which is very sad as here Paul is stating, no encouraging with much enthusiasm, that we, having been given these gifts by God's grace, to use these gifts "in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering". Yet, some state that even the gift Paul states first and foremost here, as not even a valid one for today. What is saddest to me is that here some deny the Holy Spirits' power to minister in their own flocks.

Now many attach agendas to "love" and Paul encourages us to "Let love be without hypocrisy". We should not attach our agenda, and I would be so bold to even say that to approach someone to come to our very church as possibly not having a pure motive at times. When was the last time you took time

to “love” unconditionally and without an agenda someone else. Have you fed the family that has no food without advertising who you are? Have you given blankets or coats to those who are cold, without saying I am from such and such church? Jesus stated, do not let your right hand know what your left was doing, (Matt 6:3) Yet, most often we are out promoting our church or denomination in front of Jesus! When was the last time “love” compelled you to do “good works” God prepared for us to do? (Ephesians 2:10) Try it... you might be amazed in what God will do when you step back and not put your agenda ahead of His.

Though many bibles will have the subtitles (which in no way are scripture) some might say “Act like Christians”. In this world, actors are fakes! I will state that to “act like a Christian” will make you fake! Instead practicing being what you already are... a Christian. There is no acting involved if you are already what you are. If you are redeemed of the Lord, then be just that! If you just practiced this one point in your life in Christ, you will see all the attributes Paul speaks of coming true in you. Re-read the passage from verses 9-21 and see what amazing things one will be like if agendas are dropped and letting yourself be who God is creating by the transformation of the renewing of your mind in Christ Jesus.

Lastly just a word of encouragement.

“17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.”

Over the last couple of years I have had some very awful and nasty things stated about me. I admit fully at times I became angry. Yet, I also must thank those who persecute and have attacked me in that I have learned to now laugh and not worry about protecting myself. Rather, if their accusations be false, then I will let God repay them if He desires. This has freed me in many ways. I no longer care what

someone states about me. (I will slip at times, but please extend grace! LOL!)

God is good and if I am more worried about what some fool is stating about me then I may miss a real opportunity to bless someone else!

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

If he is thirsty, give him a drink;

For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

If one does these things it will be good for you as your time will not be consumed by those who are only out to divide and hurt others. What evil can be said that any will believe if you are feeding your very enemy or giving him drink... it truly is better to overcome evil with good.

Walking through Romans: pt 18 Romans 13

Romans 13: 1Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. 6This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. 7Give everyone what you owe

him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

8Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. 9The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” 10Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

11And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. 14Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

As I looked over this chapter I it is hard to think I could ever do any better job than Paul did himself. I almost just posted this chapter without any thoughts added. Yet, as I thought more I realized that in the past I did not understand or follow this at all. Submission to authority is not optional. God ordains it and it is. Many skirt around this with rationalizations like “If the governing body is unjust and ungodly we do not need follow them.” In some sense that is justified as we have cases in scripture like Daniel who did not compromise who he was. Now I hope you caught that last bit as it is of most importance. God’s ordained authority should not change who we are in Christ. It should not compromise who we are even when it goes against God. Yet, mostly we are to live in peace and under the obedient submission to the laws of the land and governors. We in the USA seem to miss that most people do not share our ideals or even understandings of freedom and choice and many other things we just take for granted. In Jesus day there was abortion, but it was often against children who were already born... in fact Herod murdered all the males under two years old at at whim to get the rumored

new born King of the Jews.

I am not saying that we need lie down and allow unjust men to rule, yet we also must realize what we do will gain ramifications. If we live at peace and know that God is a God of order and governments are given for that purpose and in fact the taxes we pay help protect us, we need be thankful to God for protecting us in this fashion. Yet we must understand to go against those in power and to purposely break law as to steal from our neighbors, we will reap the punishment we owe. For justice goes two ways.

Debt is another area that is great in our nation. I heard one person proclaim that if we all just never paid back our credit card debts all will be on a level economic field. The issue though is of fraud. If we choose not to pay back those we owe we are committing fraud against them as we promised in good faith to pay our debts. Now, as one that has had much financial issues myself I am not condemning anyone for mistakes. Yet, we need to learn from mistakes and choose not to commit them again. We need to strive to not owe anyone anything but the debt of Love we owe God. As Paul states, “love is the fulfillment of the law.” In that we fulfill the Law by loving others. In loving others we show our own gratitude for our forgiveness and in this worship God as we Love others as we have been loved.

All this is because the time of the Lord is at hand. We need live accordingly and not speak of our faith then for all outward appearances look and live like we have not changed. I am not stating some sort of Puritan lifestyle, but that we strive to find God’s best for us and not live as those still caught in the bondage of sin live. We no longer need to seek sex in place of love for we now know love. We no longer need to drink our problems away as we have One that is on our side and will work all things out for our good and His glory. The Christian life is not about stopping “sinning” but it is not about satisfying our sinful desires. It is to live in a way that glorifies God as He lives in us.

Supplement:

Love the Higher Law:

There are some things I just can't grasp. One thing that I just can't grasp or might not agree with is Leron Shultzs' idea that we cannot analogize God. I see his point to a degree, yet the Bible is full of "God is like a..." statements. Yet, God does not have a beak or wings and Jesus is not a literal lamb... and Peter as dense as he could be sometimes was not a literal rock. So if one takes analogies to their extreme results... they will fall very short, though I do like his idea of God as "*Being in relationship.*"

Now, one area I have thought about since High School was the concept of opposites. I had a teacher that asked the question one time, "What is the opposite of love?" we all stated "hate" just like you probably just did. Yet, he pointed out that the opposite of love is not hate, but apathy or the lack of emotion. The opposite of hate is not love, the opposite of sorrow is not joy but all being emotions, are opposite to apathy. Now, I am not sure if that helps me or hurts me as far as theology. Yet let's look at something in scripture called the Higher Law of Love.

1 John 4:16b "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him."

God dwells in the emotion of love. He calls us to live in those attributes that are of love. Grace itself can be best understood as the emotion God has for us, or knowing that God loves us.

Many people are quick to state that we are to "obey God" or its variation, that we are to "*obey God's Law*". Yet miss that to obey as they teach is actually "*works*". For example, [if you read this article](#) you will note the author quotes verses on "He who does not love Me will not obey My teaching" yet misses that we cannot be obedient, for if we could, then we could obey the Law and would not have needed Jesus to die on the cross for the author only has half the teaching here... which is dangerous if one claims to be a teacher to only give half the teaching that one might mislead others down "*works*" salvation instead of total dependency on Christ Jesus for salvation. Though Jesus states "He who does

not love Me will not obey My teaching” we must recognize a few things...

Jesus is talking to Judas who had his own agenda. Jesus knew Judas would betray him, yet, still gave Judas all the chances to turn. Jesus is stating that Judas to be filled with the Spirit of Truth by the Father because Judas believes on Jesus. Yet, most importantly one must understand what it was that Jesus “commanded” us to be obedient to. Here is what the bible teaches as to what the commands we are to be obedient to.

[1 John 3: 23](#) And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

[1 John 4:21](#) And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

[Galatians 5:14](#) The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

[2 John 1:6](#) And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

Note that some seem to teach that we are still under the Mosaic law, while the bible teaches quite the opposite for Believers in Jesus. Again there is more to obedience that so many miss, and that we as mere men, have no obedience in and of ourselves. Romans 5: 19 “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”

Though many quickly accept that we have no righteousness except Jesus as well as holiness of our own outside of the Holiness of Christ all imputed to us, for some reason many still believe wrongly that they have the ability to be obedient on and in their own power, or worse that they are “helped” by the Holy Spirit to be obedient. Now, there is some merit to the last one, yet we must realize that yet we must keep it in the biblical perspective. In a book by Chuck Smith “[Charisma versus Charismania](#)” Chuck gives an example of lifting a table. We are on one side while God is on the other side and we lift

and God helps. That is a terrible example... sorry to be so blunt.

The truth is any “works” we do will be tainted, yet the works God does are always good and perfect. So, if God is helping us God is defeating His own good and perfect will. Yet, if we understand that God lifts the table and we may look like we are lifting it, we are to only give God the glory in what He is doing by lifting the table. We are to be no less dependant on God than Jesus was Himself. In His own words he states in John 5: 19 “Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

Again if we look at Romans 5:19 we will notice that “through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners”. This many readily accept and have not issue with, yet, when we get to the second half many seem to balk at the very idea they cannot be obedient! They seem to hold to that our righteousness comes from our own obedience yet we read, “so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous”. It is from the obedience of the one man (Jesus) that we are made righteous. In Hebrews 5 we read, “8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.”

Jesus learned obedience Philippians 2: 5 “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” Again we see that Jesus was obedient even unto death.

The only obedience we can give is the obedience to Love God and one another. Yet, even that is

with the understanding that Love is not generated from us, but is a response to what God has already done. That God loved us first, [1 John 4:10](#) “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

Since we have responded to the love of God, then we receive the Holy Spirit. God is love and if we have responded then God lives in us, ([1 John 4:12](#)) Once one grasps that truth, then we can allow God to work in us and through us. The sign in that this is happening in us is how we treat others. God does not care if you “repent” to Him, if you have harmed someone, yet do nothing to bring reconciliation. If you do not have reconciliation in your heart, which is driven by the love of God, then whatever you do is really worthless no matter how good one can teach.

Walking through Romans pt 20 chapter 14

Romans 14; 1. Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. 2. One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. 4. Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. 5. One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. 8. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we

belong to the Lord. 9. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

10. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

11. It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'"

12. So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. 13. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. 14. As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. 15. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. 16. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. 17. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18. because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

19. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. 20. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. 21. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. 22. So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. 23. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

Romans 14 has always had a special place in my heart. In it is such basic common sense and good

advice it can almost be missed if one is not careful. Considering in the time of Paul that many Christians found themselves wondering what to do about meat sacrificed to idols. On one hand the best and most expensive meat was the meat sacrifice in the pagan temples. Often in these temples which in some regard were like our modern day union meeting places, would sacrifice an animal to the god of their specific job title. The blacksmiths would sacrifice to the god of smithery and the construction builders would sacrifice to the god of building to over simplify this. Most probably did not believe it was to an actual “god”, but did it out of social and political motives as part of tradition in keeping with their job. With this often priests were also “butchers” and would take the sacrifice and sell it right out the back door. This was fresh and often the best cuts so it was well sought after. So even Christians would buy it and sometimes not know if it was from the temple or if it was just butchered without sacrificed.

Paul was questioned whether it was acceptable that one eat this meat. Yet, if Paul stated no, it could be taken as a legal law and requirement from him that would negate the very Grace he taught. Yet, to say yes, would leave many feeling condemned in their own minds and also cut across the teaching of the cleansing of Christ Jesus. Paul knew that to say one thing over the other would harm the faith.

Wisely, Paul also understood there was “no God but one” (1 Cor 8:4) and that being true, knew men were safe to eat as long as they recognized that all things are of God and if bless is blessed. Paul also realized that there were the “weaker” whose faith was not strong enough to see that there be but one God. Paul called those who see that there be One God to be gracious to those who were either lacking in the fullness of faith or of the fullness of understanding that God is One.

We must consider those who are not yet grown in the faith. Some be they young or even in the faith for years, are still immature in their understand should be treated with love and grace. If for example one has had trouble with alcohol, and you have reached the point that you can partake without

self condemnation or falling into drunkenness. You are in fact “free” from the bondage. You should not push or put down the one who still has issues or struggles with the alcohol. This carries over into things like Christian rock music and so on.

We should not deny our own freedom and bow to other men over their will or weakness of their will, yet we should not lord over others our freedom. Now, also we need to be aware we should not judge those that are freer than we may be ourselves or judge those who are less free. Paul’s solution was that if it is a sin to you, don’t do it as it is a sin... if it is not a sin to you; you are free, but don’t judge your brother. The Kingdom of God is not about food. It is about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. We need also remember that the Kingdom is not about music, or even Theology. We can argue and fight, yet if it is contrary to righteousness, peace and joy, it is contrary to the Kingdom.

Walking Through Romans pt 21 chapter 15

Romans 15: 1 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” 4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6 so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. 8 For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews in behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made

to the patriarchs ⁹so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name.” ¹⁰Again, it says,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

¹¹And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples.”

¹²And again, Isaiah says,

“The Root of Jesse will spring up,
one who will arise to rule over the nations;
the Gentiles will hope in him.”

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. ¹⁵I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me ¹⁶to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. ¹⁸I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done— ¹⁹by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. ²⁰It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation. ²¹Rather, as it is written:

“Those who were not told about him will see,
and those who have not heard will understand.”

22This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. 23But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, 24I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while. 25Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. 26For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 27They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. 28So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. 29I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

30I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. 31Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, 32so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed. 33The God of peace be with you all. Amen.

In part this chapter need be connected with Romans 14 and if one is true to the author one should read it in one continuous read. Paul builds from honoring the weaker brother concerning meat, and build further that we need also treat our neighbor who may or may not know Christ in ways that may build them up. It is in doing good to others that one may lead or even earn the privilege to talk to someone about Jesus.

It is a privilege that we get to share the Gospel with anyone about Jesus our King! How great an honor it is sharing with someone the truth that is Jesus. Paul states it rather curiously though in that

Jesus never sought His own pleasure that even the insults heaped upon us are on Him. Everything in the Bible that was already writing was for us to show us that Jesus is the Messiah and King. This news was so we could endure sufferings and to be encouraged that we are His and suffering is not in vain.

The Jews and Gentile have come down a long road with Paul. He has shown them that they are one in Christ and exhorts them to seek unity and stop the strife between them. This unity was not based on doctrines, though important, but on Christ Jesus. It should humble us that Jesus, King of all creation, humbly became a servant to the Jew so that a Gentile could be saved. In that this is true, as a Gentile we should rejoice in the loving kindness of God that He did not forsake us but also added the Gentile to the plan of salvation that was Jesus.

Paul speaks bold then and now. His words remind us of the urgency that we should have in keeping the truth of Christ Jesus and the Grace that comes through Him as central to our thoughts as a people of faith.

I believe Paul had confidence in the Roman believers to teach and instruct each other because Paul knew the Holy Spirit was the one teaching. Paul speaks of what God has done by the power of the Holy Spirit and boasts in that and not his own works and teachings. This should be as it is with one of faith. We need to not only boast of the working of the Holy Spirit, but depend on Him as we walk daily.

Paul must have had stories. In a way I wish he would have written the accounts of what God had done. Now, many stories are recorded in the Book of Acts, yet I suspect that there are so many more that Paul had to tell. His desire was to go where Christ Jesus had not yet been preached. This was a good plan as to build on a fresh foundation is much easier than trying to tear down old buildings to build afresh. Paul had worked hard in the regions he had already been and was still looking toward Spain. We do not know if he ever made it, but as one teacher I heard pointed out, God gives us the vision and the drive, and even if it is not we who make it to Spain thought that be our goal, the path was made ready to Spain to receive the Gospel and Jesus.

Walking through Romans pt 22 chapter 16

Romans 16: 1I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. 2I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me. 3Greet Priscilla[b] and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. 4They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. 5Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. 6Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. 7Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. 8Greet Ampliatus, whom I love in the Lord. 9Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. 10Greet Apelles, tested and approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. 11Greet Herodion, my relative. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. 12Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. 13Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. 14Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brothers with them. 15Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the saints with them. 16Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings. 17I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. 18For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. 19Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

20The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

21Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.

22 I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.

23Gaius, whose hospitality I and the whole church here enjoy, sends you his greetings.

Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.[c]

25Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him— 27to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Romans is a fantastic book. One can be carried away by the doctrines Paul teaches... and one can be carried away with knowledge Paul and forget that we must apply this book to our own life.

Some scholars seem to think that this chapter is either a second letter or a separate letter from the rest of the book. Yet, I see that it is part of the Book as the ones delivering would pass through Ephesus on their way to Rome. Here we see Paul greet many in Ephesus. Maybe, Paul had two motives here in doing this. One could be to greet and love on the people in Ephesus. The other would be to show the love of the churches outside of Rome to further encourage those in Rome toward unity in Christ.

Paul greets his "family". Some may be blood relatives and others "Blood" relatives. It is heart warming to read the different greetings. Of interest for all the "doctrine" we have Phoebe who is referred to as a "Servant" but the word is the feminine form of "deacon". This sets some who believe women should not be in leadership in the church on their heads. But it is worthy to notice for all the arguments, that Paul addresses this woman this way without issue.

Aquila and Priscilla, or the eagle and the woman as Aquila means "eagle" had eagle eyes that

could find great men of God like Apollos (Acts 18) as well as Paul himself (Acts 18). These mighty workers of God were very important to Paul as they come up in a few other letters he writes. They seemed to be mentioned as equals and as a team. Man and wife who work side by side with each other and with Paul. They also placed themselves in danger to protect Paul.

Paul addresses Epainetus, whose name means “praised”, was his first convert in Achaia which is part of Greece. Mariam, could possibly be the Mother of Jesus, who was with John. This is speculation as there are at least 6 Mary’s in the scripture. Yet, we do know Jesus told John to watch over His mother.

Noting that some names are gentiles and some are Jew should be a clue to this being a call for unity. Andronicus whose name means “man of victory” was a Jew.

Junias which is a woman’s name is called an “apostle” in reading one way, yet it could also be read she was known by the apostles. It is not clear, be she notable as one or know by again a woman is held in high esteem by Paul.

Amplias which means “enlarged” is a Roman Christian meaning he was from Rome and also a gentile.

Skipping a few we find Herodion, a relative of Paul and this phrase, “Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.” This seems to be a Roman official who had were believers.

I do not mean to not mention some. I wish I could write more on each person and maybe someday I could. One though that has an interesting story is Rufus. He was a disciple of Paul as thought in tradition, was Bishop of Avignon (though there is no hard evidence of this) though he was bishop to a few other churches. He later was living in Rome when Paul sent this greeting. During the persecution of Trajan, Polycarp speaks of Rufus and Ignatius of Antioch who were put to death in Rome, in his letter to the Philippians.

“17. I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. 18. for such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. 19. Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. 20. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.”

This is some of the greatest advice. It seems futile to engage those who are divisive as they cannot see the harm they do others. As I have engaged these types of people I find that their own ambition clouds their ability to see that this does nothing for the Kingdom. It is best to avoid and ignore them. If only I would take my own advise! These people try to persuade the naïve with smooth talk and flattery and spread lies, rumors and slander others, so they can have personal gain be that monetary or the attention of others. The great danger is that they desire the accolades of men exchange it for the works of God. It is best to be ignorant of the evil of these people and leave them to God who will crush Satan under His feet. Giving room for God to work is the best advice I could give. Paul states that a blessing of Grace to those who encounter such people.

“I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.”

This can be confusing to the casual reader. Did not Paul write this book? Then why is this Tertius saying he did? Often one would dictate a letter and another would literally write the words down. This happens even today in business as a secretary will “take a letter” yet the letter is from the one who dictated the letter. So, there is no issue as to the authorship of Romans. Yet, even Tertius sends greeting also.

“25. Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26. but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might

believe and obey him— 27. to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.”

This salutation could take a whole chapter to unpack in and of it's self.

Paul showed us a great mystery. This mystery was Christ Jesus Himself. It was revealed in the Gospel and proclamation of Jesus. Without Jesus the prophetic writings make little sense, yet with Jesus we can not only change on a personal level; we can also have power to reach the nations with the message of Jesus Christ. To this I agree with Paul that we give glory forever through Jesus Christ for God's great wisdom.