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# NIV ZONDERVAN STUDY BIBLE



Built on the Truth of Scripture  
and Centered on the Gospel Message

D.A. CARSON  
GENERAL EDITOR

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

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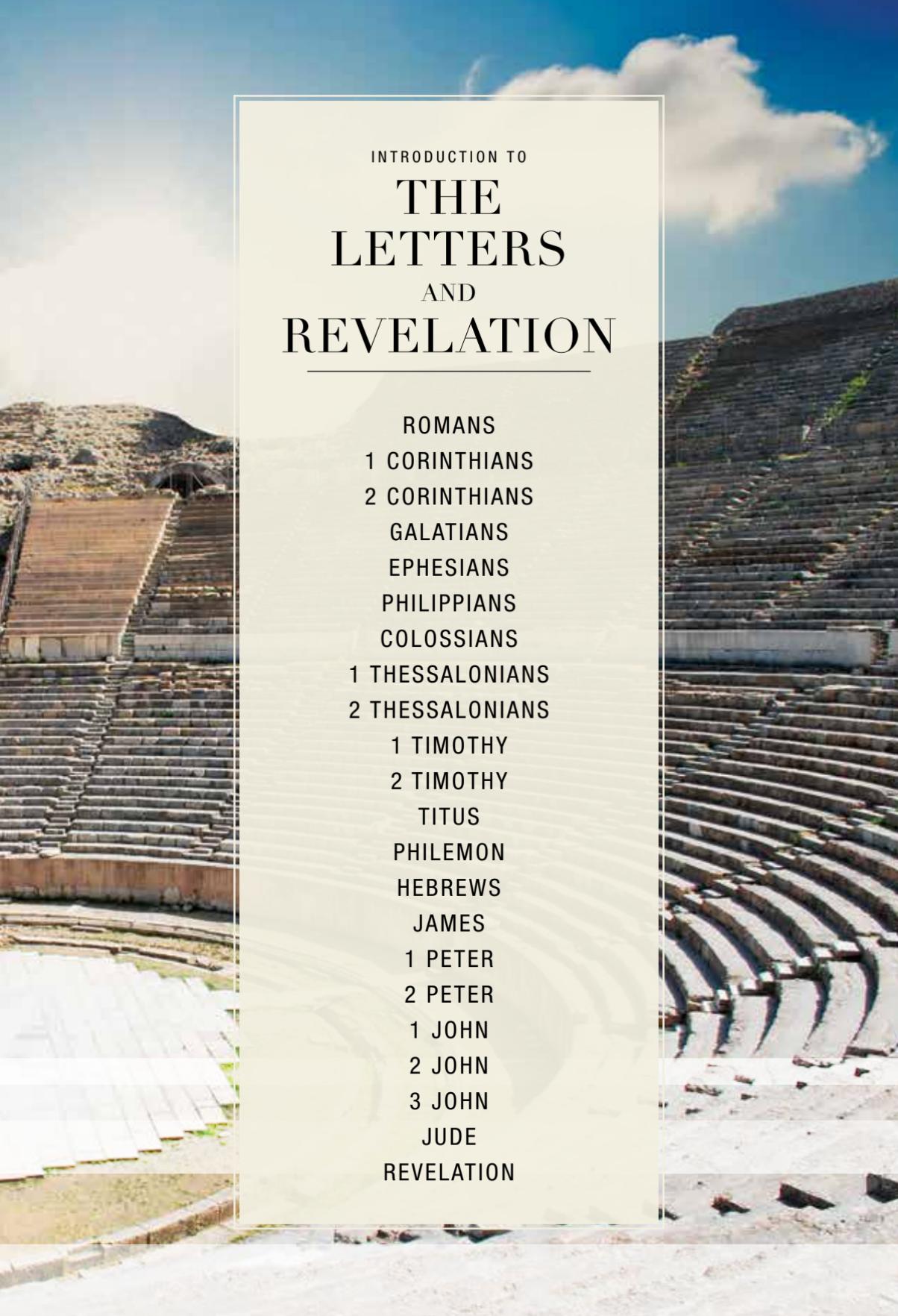
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INTRODUCTION TO  
**THE  
LETTERS**  
AND  
**REVELATION**

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ROMANS

1 CORINTHIANS

2 CORINTHIANS

GALATIANS

EPHESIANS

PHILIPPIANS

COLOSSIANS

1 THESSALONIANS

2 THESSALONIANS

1 TIMOTHY

2 TIMOTHY

TITUS

PHILEMON

HEBREWS

JAMES

1 PETER

2 PETER

1 JOHN

2 JOHN

3 JOHN

JUDE

REVELATION



# THE LETTERS AND REVELATION

*Douglas J. Moo*

Letters occupy an important place in the NT. Of the 27 books of the NT, 21 are letters—35 percent of the NT. By contrast, no OT book is in the form of a letter, though letters are preserved within those books.

There are many reasons that letters loom so large in the NT, but three deserve mention. First, letters were a very popular method of communication in the NT world (see *New Testament Letters in Their Ancient Context*). Second, the early Christian movement was scattered across a wide area, and letters afforded a natural way for believers to keep in touch with each other. Apostles, who are responsible for at least 19 of the 21 NT letters, traveled widely and used letters as a means of “pastoring” churches from a distance. Third, and related to this second factor, the letter was considered a means of establishing one’s personal presence at a distance. When the apostles were unable to assert their authority in person, they used letters as a “stand-in” for their presence (see 1 Cor 5:4; Col 2:5).

NT letter writers, as we would expect, focus on issues relevant to their audiences. Spread across the eastern Mediterranean world, from modern Turkey to Rome, Christians are thanked for sending gifts (Philippians), warned about false teachers (2 Peter, Jude), encouraged in the midst of persecution (1 Peter), and rebuked for dallying with idol worship (1 Corinthians). Yet these first-century issues are addressed in the light of God’s revelation of his Son. They have been preserved in our Bibles as enduring witnesses to the truth of the gospel and to the way that truth is to form the lives of God’s people.

## **Classifying the New Testament Letters**

The 21 NT letters were written by six different early Christian leaders: 13

letters are attributed to the apostle Paul; two to the apostle Peter; one to James; and one to Jude, “a brother of James” (Jude 1). No specific name is associated with the four remaining letters. The author of Hebrews cannot be identified. The author of 2 and 3 John is identified as “the elder” (2 John 1; 3 John 1), and the similarities in style and content with 1 John make it likely that the same author is responsible for all three. As the titles in our Bibles suggest, John the son of Zebedee, one of the 12 apostles and the author of the fourth Gospel, is probably the writer of these three letters. (These titles indicate the way these letters were viewed in the early church, but the titles were not part of the original NT text.)

## **Hebrews and the General Letters**

Paul wrote 13 of the NT letters. The remaining eight letters defy simple classification. Many Christians in the first centuries of the church thought that Paul wrote Hebrews, so it was included among the Pauline letters. The other seven letters (James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude) were then categorized as “catholic” (in the sense of “universal”) or “general” letters because it was thought that they were written to the church as a whole (see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2:23–25). The titles given to these books reflect this way of looking at them: rather than being named according to their destinations or audiences, as in the case of all the Pauline letters and Hebrews, they are named according to their authors.

This traditional way of categorizing the letters does not stand up to scrutiny. Hebrews was almost certainly not written by Paul (see Introduction to Hebrews: Author). Nor is it likely that the remaining seven letters were written to the church “universal.”

To be sure, none of them is explicitly addressed to a single local church (or group of house churches). But they do have specific audiences in view. The letters of 2–3 John explicitly address, respectively, a local church (taking “the lady chosen by God” in this sense [2 John 1]) and a Christian leader (Gaius [3 John 1]). First Peter addresses Christians living in five Roman provinces in northern Asia Minor. Three of the letters, to be sure, have very general addressees. James writes to “the twelve tribes” (Jas 1:1), a reference to the people of God in the era of fulfillment; Peter writes in his second letter to “those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours” (2 Pet 1:1); and Jude writes to “those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ” (Jude 1). But the content of these letters shows that the authors are dealing with specific problems that are probably confined to a particular church or group of churches. The same is true of 1 John (which lacks any addressee).

## **Paul’s Letters**

Paul, for his part, addresses nine of his letters to particular local churches, three to co-workers in ministry (1–2 Timothy, Titus), and one primarily to a co-worker and secondarily to two other prominent believers and the church that met in his house (Philemon). Paul’s letters have usually been divided into four main groups:

1. Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, and Galatians have been labeled the “chief letters” because of their length and theological content.

2. Ephesians, Colossians, Philipians, and Philemon are called the “prison letters” because Paul claims to be “in chains” in each of them.



**Crypt of Santa Maria in via Lata in Rome.** This area was built in the first century, but radically restructured in the third century. It is a possible location for Paul's house arrest.

© Lorenzo Pio Massimo Martino

3. 1–2 Timothy and Titus are called the “pastoral letters” because of their common themes and the fact that they are addressed to Paul’s co-workers.

4. 1–2 Thessalonians comprise the fourth group.

This traditional scheme corresponds generally to the historical circumstances in which the letters were written—with two exceptions. First, while Galatians shares many themes with Romans, it may not come from the same period of time as the other three “chief letters.” Second, Philippians stands apart from the other prison letters. The common themes and specific historical references common to Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon are absent from Philippians. Whether Paul wrote Philippians at a different time during the same imprisonment as the others or during a different imprisonment entirely is not clear.

### New Testament Letters in Their Ancient Context

Though letters were used as a means of communication for centuries (see, e.g., 2 Sam 11:14–15; Ezra 4–5), it was in the Greco-Roman world that letters became an established and popular method of communication. The NT, as

we have seen, reflects this situation. In addition to the 21 canonical letters, the NT refers to at least nine other letters written by and to believers (Acts 15:23; 18:27; 1 Cor 5:9; 7:1; 16:3; 2 Cor 2:3–4; Col 4:16 [two different letters are mentioned]; 2 Thess 2:2; note also the seven letters to the churches in Rev 2–3).

### Introduction and Conclusion

NT letters follow the general pattern of the Greco-Roman letter, although

a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” [Jas 1:1]) and of the recipients (e.g., “to God’s holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ” [Col 1:1]). In Romans, Paul spends six verses introducing himself. On the other hand, some NT letters (Hebrews, 1 John) have no letter opening at all.

In place of the usual “greeting” found in Greco-Roman letters, NT letters often include a “grace wish” (it is found in all the Pauline letters, 1–2 Peter, and 2 John). The NT letter writers may be indulging in a bit of wordplay: Greek “greetings” is *chairein*, whereas Greek “grace” is *charis*. Ancient letters also often opened with a “health wish” (see 3 John 2); perhaps the NT penchant for putting a thanksgiving (all the Pauline letters except Galatians, 2 Corinthians, 1 Timothy, and Titus) or blessing (2 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Peter) at the beginning of letters reflects this practice.

The concluding elements in the ancient letter varied considerably, although they typically included a request to greet other people. NT letter closings often include such requests for greetings and, in addition, often mention travel plans, the movements and work of other ministry workers,

## What is true concerning Paul’s teaching about the law in Galatians is true for many, if not most, of the issues discussed in the NT letters.

there are differences. The typical Greco-Roman letter was composed of an address and greeting, a body, and a conclusion.

The address and greeting were usually very short, typically taking the form “A to B, greetings.” NT letters tend to expand this formula, adding characterizations of the sender (e.g., “James,

requests for prayer, and benedictions and doxologies.

### Body

The formal introduction and conclusion framed the letter body. Naturally, the letter body differed considerably in length and substance, depending on the purpose and audience of the letter.

Some ancient letters were very brief personal notes requesting information or asking someone to perform a specific task. None of the NT letters is this kind of private note. Even the letters written to individuals (1–2 Timothy, Titus, 3 John) deal with practical and theological issues affecting other Christians. At the other end of the spectrum, some ancient letters were written for a very general audience and intended for wide distribution (somewhat comparable to our “letter to the editor”). Especially relevant for the NT are letters sent by philosophers to communicate their teachings to a wider audience. Some NT letters tend toward this type (Romans, Ephesians, 1 John). Yet even these more generally focused letters are written for specific audiences.

While using the popular letter form of their time, the writers adopt the form for their own uses. For instance, many of the NT letters stand out from their contemporary secular models in length. Private letters in the ancient world averaged 87 words in length. Public letters were longer. Two of the most pro-

lific letter writers in the ancient world were the Romans Cicero and Seneca. The former’s letters average 295 words; Seneca’s, 995. By contrast, the shortest NT letter (2 John) is 219 words, the longest (Romans) is 7,111 words, and they average 2,141 words.

### Writing, Sending, and Receiving New Testament Letters

Communicating by letter writing in the ancient world was a cooperative enterprise. The first-person singular verbs scattered through all the NT letters make clear that one particular individual is largely responsible for each of them. However, Paul frequently includes co-workers when he introduces the writers of his letters: Timothy in Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon; Timothy and Silas in 1–2 Thessalonians; and “all the brothers and sisters with me” in Galatians (1:2). Paul usually mentioned these co-workers because they were with him as he wrote and had significant contact with the believers being addressed. Mentioning other believers (as in the broader group in Galatians) may also

strengthen Paul’s appeal in the letter by reminding the recipients that he was speaking for a wider group of believers.

Producing letters was also a cooperative venture. The parchment on which the words of letters were physically recorded was expensive, and most ancient letter writers dictated their letters to a scribe, or “amanuensis,” who was skilled at fitting a lot of words into a very small space. We have one definite reference to such an amanuensis in the NT: “I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord” (Rom 16:22). Tertius recorded the words of Romans as Paul dic-

tated them to him (many interpreters think that 1 Pet 5:12 may also single out Silas as the amanuensis of that letter). The actual “author” of the letter would sometimes add a final, authenticating greeting in his own hand (see Gal 6:11; 2 Thess 3:17; Phlm 19). Most of the NT letters were probably produced in this way. Authors who knew and trusted their amanuenses would often entrust that amanuensis with the precise wording of a letter. This may explain some of the variety in style among NT letters with the same author (Paul and Peter). We can assume that NT authors took ownership of their letters by checking them over to make sure that the amanuensis had accurately communicated the author’s intentions.

If the writing of a letter was a collective enterprise, so was its delivery. Mail service was basically nonexistent in the ancient world. The only way to get a letter to its destination was to entrust it to a friend or associate who was traveling to the destination of the letter. While never mentioned explicitly in the NT, letter carriers can be identified by language such as we find in Eph 6:21: “Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.” Col 4:7 is similar; see also Phoebe in Rom 16:1–2, Epaphroditus in Phil 2:25–30, and Silas in 1 Pet 5:12 (if he is not the amanuensis; see preceding paragraph). These letter carriers probably also played a significant role in the dissemination of the letter once it reached its destination. They would often be the ones to read the letter to the assembled congregation, adding information and perhaps clarification along the way (see Eph 6:21, quoted above, and also Col 4:7–9).

### The Authenticity of New Testament Letters

Many books in the ancient world were written by an anonymous person in the name of a more famous person. A



**Fourth-century relief of an orator dictating to a scribe. An amanuensis was often used to produce letters in New Testament times, including by Paul (Rom 16:22).**

Relief depicting orator dictating to scribe, from Temple of Hercules at Ostia Antica/De Agostini Picture Library/G. Dagli Orti/Bridgeman Images

Jewish apocalyptic work from the first century AD, for instance, is attributed to the ancient Israelite scribe Ezra. Many modern scholars identify this phenomenon, called “pseudepigraphy,” in the NT letters. It is typical, for instance, to claim that the apostle Paul himself actually wrote only seven of the thirteen letters attributed to him (Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon) and that Paul’s followers wrote the other six letters in his name. Simi-

lar doubt is cast on the authorship of James and 1–2 Peter. According to one form of this theory, the authors who wrote in the name of the apostles were not being deceptive but simply using a standard literary device of the time to communicate Christian truth. However, while pseudepigraphy in general was widespread in the ancient world, the writing of *letters* in someone else’s name did not often take place. And when it did, the practice was frowned upon. The church fathers are very

clear on this point: they viewed writing a letter in someone else’s name as inherently deceptive, and they roundly rejected any letter suspected of being pseudepigraphical. In light of this attitude, we should take the claims about authorship of NT letters at face value.

## Interpreting New Testament Letters

### Occasion

NT letters are “occasional,” i.e., they are written to a particular first-century

## SUMMARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

	LETTER	AUTHOR	RECIPIENTS	PLACE OF WRITING	DATE
	James	James, brother of the Lord	Jewish believers living outside of Israel	Jerusalem	45–48 (or 60s)
First Missionary Journey	Galatians	Paul	Believers in the Roman province of Galatia or Believers in the ethnic region of Galatia	Antioch or Ephesus (?)	48 (or 51–52 or 54–55)
Second Missionary Journey	1 Thessalonians	Paul	Believers in Thessalonica	Corinth	50–51
	2 Thessalonians	Paul	Believers in Thessalonica	Corinth	50–51
	1 Corinthians	Paul	Believers in Corinth	Ephesus	54–55
Third Missionary Journey	2 Corinthians	Paul	Believers in Corinth	Macedonia	55–56
	Romans	Paul	Believers in Rome	Corinth	57
	Ephesians	Paul	Believers in Ephesus (and in nearby cities)	Rome	60–61
	Colossians	Paul	Believers in Colossae	Rome	60–61
	Philemon	Paul	Philemon, a ministry co-worker in Colossae, and the church that met in his home	Rome	60–61
	Philippians	Paul	Believers in Philippi	Rome (or Ephesus?)	62 (or 54–55)
	1 Timothy	Paul	Timothy, a ministry associate working in Ephesus	Macedonia (?)	62–63
	Titus	Paul	Titus, a ministry associate working in Crete	Unknown	62–63
	2 Timothy	Paul	Timothy, a ministry associate	Rome	64–65 (or 67)
	Hebrews	Unknown	Believers in Rome (?)	Unknown	60s
	1 Peter	The apostle Peter	Believers in northern Asia Minor	Rome (?)	60–63
	2 Peter	The apostle Peter	Believers in northern Asia Minor	Unknown	63–65
	Jude	Jude, a brother of James	Unknown	Unknown	Late 50s to late 60s
	1 John	The apostle John	Believers in Ephesus and surrounding regions (?)	Ephesus (?)	Early 90s
	2 John	The apostle John	A church in the region of Ephesus	Ephesus (?)	Early 90s
	3 John	The apostle John	Gaius, a ministry co-worker	Ephesus (?)	Early 90s

audience and therefore naturally deal with issues relevant to that audience. Because the NT letter writers are engaged in helping their recipients understand the significance of Christ's coming and put into practice the implications of his lordship, the issues the NT deals with are often the same issues Christians face today. But even when those issues are the same, faithfully interpreting the NT letters demands that we take into account the occasional nature of those letters.

Paul's teaching on the significance of the law of Moses in Galatians provides a good example. His teaching on this issue is clearly of enduring relevance, and what he says on this matter must figure importantly in our attempt to understand the place of the law of Moses in the history of salvation and in the life of the church. But we must also recognize that Paul writes to the Galatians about the law of Moses with a particular purpose: to convince them not to follow false teachers who have taken a wrong view about the law. Because Paul is refuting a particular viewpoint, his teaching is inevitably slanted to one side of the issue.

What is true concerning Paul's teaching about the law in Galatians is true for many, if not most, of the issues discussed in the NT letters. Many of these letters were written directly to counter some kind of false teaching, and what the NT letter writers say is tailored to that situation. To read and interpret these letters rightly, then, requires that we understand the situations in which they were written; this information is provided in this study Bible's separate book introductions. At the same time, we must always compare Scripture with Scripture before drawing broad conclusions about what the NT or the Bible says about any particular topic.

### *Social and Cultural Context*

The occasional nature of the NT letters provides another interpretive

challenge: recognizing how the first-century social and cultural context might affect our reading. Both the writers and readers of the NT letters often simply assumed this context, but it is sometimes utterly foreign to modern readers. For example, just what were the women in Corinth doing that upset Paul (1 Cor 11:2–16)? Were they refusing to wear a veil over their heads? Were they refusing to “put their hair up” on their heads? And, in either case, why would Paul have a problem with it? Only by understanding the culture of that day can we hope to accurately understand what Paul is teaching in this passage. Faithfully reading the NT letters will often, then, require the believer to learn something about the first-century world—an inquiry that the notes on particular passages in this study Bible should assist with.

### *General Principles*

Whatever the particular issue a NT letter deals with, the way in which the author responds to it has much to teach us. We learn not only from the specific instructions the letter writers give but also from the general principles they constantly bring to bear on each issue they confront. Again and again the NT letter writers remind us of the all-encompassing importance of the lordship of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. The believer's every thought and action must be subjected to Christ, who as Lord wants to reign over every facet of the believer's life. And it is the Holy Spirit who both empowers and guides this radically Christ-centered new life. When the NT letter writers call on believers to think and act in accord with the person of Christ, they expect believers to respond because God has sent his Spirit into the hearts of his people, producing from within the attitudes and perspectives that will enable them to obey. As

“occasional” letters, we must read each NT letter against the background of its particular setting, asking: when was it written? for whom? why? in what circumstances? But at the same time, God himself speaks to us in and through these occasional letters. As canonical Scripture, these letters ultimately address the church of every age and of every place. ■



**Statue of woman wearing a chiton and himation, 1st century AD. It is important to understand the cultural context of Paul's comments on covering the head in worship (1Cor 11).**

Kim Walton, courtesy of the National Archaeological Museum of Athens



## INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS

### AUTHOR

The letter to the Romans was written by the apostle Paul (1:1). No coauthor is mentioned, although Tertius was the man who served as Paul's scribe, or amanuensis, writing down Paul's words as he dictated them (16:22).

### OCCASION, DATE, AND PLACE OF WRITING

Paul gives us considerable information about his situation in 15:14–33. He suggests that he has reached an important turning point in his ministry. He speaks of having “fully proclaimed” the gospel “from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum” (15:19) — the territory where he planted vibrant churches during his first three missionary journeys. The next focus of his missionary effort is all the way at the other end of the Mediterranean basin: Spain (15:24). Before going to Spain, however, he has two important stops to make. His immediate plans are to travel to Jerusalem in order to deliver to the Jewish Christians there some money from many of the Gentile churches he planted (15:25–27). After Jerusalem, Paul hopes to pass through Rome to visit this important center of Christianity and to enlist their support for his new missionary venture (15:23–24). When we add to this information Paul's reference to a woman from Cenchreae (16:1), a city very close to Corinth, the setting of Romans becomes pretty certain: he was writing from Corinth during his three-month stay there toward the end of his third missionary journey (Acts 20:3–4).

### LOCATIONS VISITED BY PAUL



The date of this stay was probably AD 57. Romans, then, was the third letter Paul wrote on this missionary journey (after 1 Corinthians in perhaps AD 54 and 2 Corinthians in AD 55–56).

## RECIPIENTS

Paul writes to all the believers in the city of Rome (1:7). The NT tells us nothing about how Christianity first came to Rome, but a plausible scenario is that Jewish believers who were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10 says that “visitors from Rome” were there) brought their new faith back to their home city. The early Christian given the name Ambrosiaster (late fourth century), then, was probably right in claiming in his commentary on Paul’s letters that the Romans “embraced the faith of Christ, albeit according to the Jewish rite, without seeing any sign of mighty works or any of the apostles.”

Several passages in Romans suggest, however, that most of the Roman Christians were Gentiles when Paul wrote (1:6–7, 13; 15:15–16). Some Gentiles were probably attracted to the faith from the beginning, having heard about the message of Jesus as “God-fearers” (Gentiles who attended the synagogue without converting to Judaism). The Gentile element in the Roman church received a significant boost in AD 49 when Claudius expelled all the Jews from Rome (see Acts 18:2). Jewish Christians would have been included in this eviction order, so the Christian movement would have become almost entirely Gentile overnight. By the time Paul wrote the letter to the church in Rome, however, Jews had been allowed back into the city. Thus, Paul’s audience included Jewish Christians such as Priscilla and Aquila (16:3–5; cf. Acts 18:2).

## PURPOSE

Paul has several purposes in writing to the Romans.

1. Paul hopes to enlist the support of the Roman Christians for his new ministry in Spain (15:24). Spain is a long way from his original “sending” church in Antioch, and he needs a ministry base closer to Spain to provide monetary and logistical support. Paul writes Romans, then, partly to introduce himself to a church that he did not found and has never visited (1:13; 15:22).

2. While Romans is justly famous for its deep theology, Paul is also concerned, as he is in all his letters, to address the situation of his readers. Of course, we must avoid the mistake of thinking that very deep theology might not be of very fundamental practical importance! But 14:1–15:13 reveals that Paul does have an eye on a particular issue in Rome. The believers are divided into two factions, which Paul labels the “weak” in faith and the “strong” in faith



**The Forum: the economic, social, religious and cultural center of ancient Rome.**

(15:1). These factions were quarreling over whether Christians must continue to observe certain Jewish practices derived from the law of Moses. Paul hopes to heal this unfortunate division.

3. The conflict between the “weak” and “strong” in Rome was a microcosm of the major theological issue in Paul’s day. As the Christian movement became increasingly Gentile over the decades, the relationship between Christianity and its OT and Jewish roots became more and more controversial. Some, mainly Jewish Christians, were arguing for a great deal of continuity: Christians were a Jewish Messianic sect that should continue to observe the law of Moses (this was the view of the “agitators” whom Paul combats in Galatia [Gal 5:12]). Others, mainly Gentile Christians, wondered why they should have anything to do with the OT or the law at all. As Paul writes to the Romans about the division there between these two general positions, he develops a theology of universal significance that seeks a middle position between these views.

## MAJOR THEMES

Romans is one of the most important theological documents of all time. Its influence on the course of Christian history and the development of Christian theology is inestimable. It offers several themes:

- fundamental insights into the nature of the human predicament (1:18 — 3:20);
- God’s response to that predicament in the new standing with God offered to all humans through the work of Christ, the utterly gracious character of God’s provision, and the consequent requirement of faith as the only way to experience that provision (3:21 — 4:25);
- security for this life and the future day of judgment that Christians enjoy (5:1 — 8:39);
- the mysterious and wonderful plan of God to include both Jews and Gentiles in his people (9:1 — 11:36); and
- the transformed thinking and living that God expects of his redeemed people (12:1 — 15:13).

Perhaps the single overarching theme of Romans is the gospel, which the letter prominently mentions in both its opening and closing (1:1,2,9,15; 15:16,19) and which is the lead term in Paul’s statement of the letter’s theme (1:16). The gospel, or Good News, is that God has intervened in our history in order to reestablish his lordship over a created world that has rebelled against him. Paul especially emphasizes that God has offered the opportunity to all human beings, through simple faith in Christ, to be placed in a right standing before God.

Because the division between Jew and Gentile is so important an issue in both Rome and in the broader Christian world, Paul focuses often on the way the gospel includes both groups. On the one hand, the gospel provides for the fulfillment of all God’s OT promises to Israel (1:2; 9:1 — 11:36). On the other hand, the gospel opens the door to Gentiles so that they can become equal participants with faithful Jews in God’s new covenant people.

## OUTLINE

### I. The Letter Opening (1:1 – 17)

- A. Prescript (1:1 – 7)
- B. Paul’s Longing to Visit Rome (1:8 – 17)

### II. The Heart of the Gospel: Justification by Faith (1:18 — 4:25)

- A. The Universal Reign of Sin (1:18 — 3:20)
  1. God’s Wrath Against Sinful Humanity (1:18 – 32)
  2. Jews Are Accountable to God for Sin (2:1 — 3:8)
    - a. God’s Righteous Judgment (2:1 – 16)
    - b. The Jews and the Law (2:17 – 29)
    - c. God’s Faithfulness (3:1 – 8)
  3. No One Is Righteous (3:9 – 20)
- B. Justification by Faith (3:21 — 4:25)
  1. Righteousness Through Faith (3:21 – 31)
  2. Abraham Justified by Faith (4:1 – 25)

### III. The Assurance Provided by the Gospel: The Hope of Salvation (5:1 — 8:39)

- A. The Hope of Glory (5:1 – 21)
  1. Peace and Hope (5:1 – 11)
  2. Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ (5:12 – 21)

- B. Freedom From Bondage to Sin (6:1–23)
  - 1. Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ (6:1–14)
  - 2. Slaves to Righteousness (6:15–23)
- C. Freedom From Bondage to the Law (7:1–25)
  - 1. Released From the Law, Bound to Christ (7:1–6)
  - 2. The Law and Sin (7:7–25)
- D. Assurance of Eternal Life in the Spirit (8:1–39)
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#### **IV. The Defense of the Gospel: The Problem of Israel (9:1 — 11:36)**

- A. Paul's Anguish Over Israel (9:1–5)
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- A. A Living Sacrifice (12:1–2)
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- G. The Weak and the Strong (14:1 — 15:13)
  - 1. Do Not Judge Each Other (14:1–23)
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#### **VI. The Letter Closing (15:14 — 16:27)**

- A. Paul the Minister to the Gentiles (15:14–22)
- B. Paul's Plan to Visit Rome (15:23–33)
- C. Personal Greetings (16:1–27)



# ROMANS

**1** Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle<sup>a</sup> and set apart<sup>b</sup> for the gospel of God<sup>c</sup> — <sup>2</sup>the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures<sup>d</sup> <sup>3</sup>regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life<sup>ae</sup> was a descendant of David,<sup>4</sup> and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power<sup>b</sup> by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. <sup>5</sup>Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles<sup>f</sup> to the obedience that comes from<sup>c</sup> faith<sup>g</sup> for his name's sake. <sup>6</sup>And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.<sup>h</sup>

1:1 <sup>a</sup>1Co 1:1 <sup>b</sup>Ac 9:15  
<sup>c</sup>2Co 11:7  
 1:2 <sup>d</sup>Gal 3:8  
 1:3 <sup>e</sup>Jn 1:14  
 1:5 <sup>f</sup>Ac 9:15 <sup>g</sup>Ac 6:7  
 1:6 <sup>h</sup>Rev 17:14  
 1:7 <sup>i</sup>Ro 8:39 <sup>j</sup>1Co 1:3

<sup>7</sup>To all in Rome who are loved by God<sup>i</sup> and called to be his holy people:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>j</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 3 Or *who according to the flesh*      <sup>b</sup> 4 Or *was declared with power to be the Son of God*      <sup>c</sup> 5 Or *that is*

**1:1–17 The Letter Opening.** The first section (1:1–17) and last section of Romans (15:14–16:27) provide the literary frame for the letter. The opening includes a salutation (vv. 1–7), a thanksgiving (vv. 8–15), and a statement of the letter's theme (vv. 16–17).

**1:1–7 Prescript.** Ancient letters typically began by briefly identifying the sender and recipients, followed by a greeting (see Acts 15:23: "The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings"). Paul elaborates on this simple formula in all his letters but nowhere more so than in Romans—perhaps because he is writing to a church that he has never visited.

**1:1 servant.** Could also be translated "slave." It stresses that Paul owes allegiance to Christ as his Lord, and it also alludes to the OT "servant of the Lord," a description of important leaders of Israel: Moses (Deut 34:5; Josh 14:7; 2 Kgs 18:12), Joshua (Josh 24:29), Elijah (see 2 Kgs 10:10) and, especially often, David (e.g., Ps 18 title; see 2 Sam 7:8). **set apart.** Either from the womb of his mother (Gal 1:15; cf. Jer 1:5) or at the time God called him to be an apostle (1 Cor 1:1). **gospel.** "Good news," a key theme in Romans. The language is prominent in the letter's opening (here; vv. 9, 15, 16) and closing (15:16, 19, 20; 16:25; see also 2:16; 10:15; 11:28). The OT uses "good news" to depict God's intervention on behalf of his people in the last days (Isa 40:9; 52:7 [cited in Rom 10:15]; 61:1; Nah 1:15). But it was also used in Paul's day to refer to the benefits the Roman emperors won for their subjects. Paul's apostolic ministry involves proclaiming that Jesus fulfills OT prophecies of restoration and that Jesus, not the Roman emperor, is the source of our hope and the one who claims our ultimate allegiance.

**1:2 through his prophets.** An important focus of Romans is the connection between the OT (especially its promises) and the gospel of Christ (see also 3:21; 9:4–6; 11:28; 15:8–13). This verse and 16:26—"made known through the prophetic writings"—bracket the letter as a whole.

**1:3 regarding his Son.** The good news is a person: God's Son. **as to his earthly life.** Could also be translated "according to the flesh." Paul uses "flesh" (Greek *sarx*) to denote the state of being human, emphasizing

the weakness and susceptibility to sin that typifies what it means to be human after the fall. The word sometimes has the sense of human existence apart from or even in contrast to God (e.g., 8:4–13), but at other times, as here, it refers simply to being human. **descendant of David.** Alludes to Jesus' fulfilling the OT expectation of a "son of David," a king or Messiah, who would liberate and rule God's people (e.g., 2 Sam 7:13–16; Ps 2).

**1:4 appointed the Son of God in power.** Jesus is eternally God's Son, but his resurrection from the dead enabled him to enter a new phase of existence in which his work on the cross empowers him to save all who believe (see v. 16).

**1:5 call all the Gentiles.** While committed to preach the gospel to all kinds of people, Paul was called to preach especially to the Gentiles (11:13–14; cf. Gal 2:7). **obedience that comes from faith.** This phrase, also used in 16:26, is another phrase that brackets the argument of Romans (see note on v. 2). Paul may mean that faith is the form that obedience takes in the new era (in other words, "the obedience that is faith"; see 10:16, where Paul says that the Israelites "accepted" [translating the same Greek word for "obeyed"] the gospel). But he probably means that faith in Christ naturally leads to a life of dedicated faithfulness to Christ, of obedience to Christ. For Paul, "faith" and "obedience," while always to be distinguished, are inseparable, two sides of the same coin. One cannot have faith in Christ Jesus without acknowledging him as Lord, with all the consequences that follow from that basic commitment.

**1:6 called.** That is, not "invited," but actually brought into relationship with God by his own sovereign act (what is labeled in theology "the effectual call" see 8:28).

**1:7 his holy people.** Greek *hagioi*, meaning "holy ones" or "saints." **holy.** The OT uses this term to describe the Israelites, who were "set apart" to be God's own people (see, e.g., Lev 20:24, 26). The NT often uses this word and related words to denote not people who are particularly holy in their lifestyle (this is why "saints" can be a misleading English

1:8 <sup>k</sup>1Co 1:4 <sup>l</sup>Ro 16:19  
 1:9 <sup>m</sup>2Ti 1:3 <sup>n</sup>Php 1:8  
 1:10 <sup>o</sup>Ro 15:32  
 1:11 <sup>p</sup>Ro 15:23  
 1:13 <sup>q</sup>Ro 15:22, 23  
 1:14 <sup>r</sup>1Co 9:16  
 1:15 <sup>s</sup>Ro 15:20  
 1:16 <sup>t</sup>2Ti 1:8 <sup>u</sup>1Co 1:18  
<sup>v</sup>Ac 3:26 <sup>w</sup>Ro 2:9, 10  
 1:17 <sup>x</sup>Ro 3:21 <sup>y</sup>Hab 2:4;  
 Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38  
 1:18 <sup>z</sup>Eph 5:6; Col 3:6

### Paul's Longing to Visit Rome

<sup>8</sup>First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you,<sup>k</sup> because your faith is being reported all over the world.<sup>l</sup> <sup>9</sup>God, whom I serve<sup>m</sup> in my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness<sup>n</sup> how constantly I remember you <sup>10</sup>in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.<sup>o</sup>

<sup>11</sup>I long to see you<sup>p</sup> so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong — <sup>12</sup>that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. <sup>13</sup>I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,<sup>a</sup> that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now)<sup>q</sup> in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

<sup>14</sup>I am obligated<sup>r</sup> both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. <sup>15</sup>That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.<sup>s</sup>

<sup>16</sup>For I am not ashamed of the gospel,<sup>t</sup> because it is the power of God<sup>u</sup> that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew,<sup>v</sup> then to the Gentile.<sup>w</sup> <sup>17</sup>For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed<sup>x</sup> — a righteousness that is by faith from first to last,<sup>b</sup> just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."<sup>y</sup><sup>c</sup>

### God's Wrath Against Sinful Humanity

<sup>18</sup>The wrath of God<sup>z</sup> is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, <sup>19</sup>since what may be known about God is plain to

<sup>a</sup> 13 The Greek word for *brothers and sisters* (*adelphoi*) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God's family; also in 7:1, 4; 8:12, 29; 10:1; 11:25; 12:1; 15:14, 30; 16:14, 17. <sup>b</sup> 17 Or is from faith to faith

<sup>c</sup> 17 Hab. 2:4

translation) but all those people whom God has called to belong to him (v. 6). Status, not behavior, is in view (see the article "Holiness," p. XXXX). **1:8–17 Paul's Longing to Visit Rome.** As he usually does in his letters, Paul gives thanks for his readers (vv. 8–15) before announcing the theme of the letter (vv. 16–17).

**1:8 thank.** Paul's letters usually feature a thanksgiving in the opening section. **all over the world.** That is, across the Roman Empire of Paul's day.

**1:11 spiritual gift.** Either a particular one that Paul hopes to bestow on the Roman believers (12:6–8) or a spiritual benefit that Paul's ministry in Rome will convey.

**1:12 mutually.** Writing to a church that he did not establish and has never visited, Paul is appropriately humble.

**1:13 prevented.** Probably by pressing ministry needs in the eastern Mediterranean, where Paul has been preaching the gospel for over a decade (see 15:19).

**1:14 Greeks.** The cultured people in Paul's world who often spoke Greek and followed Greek ways of life. **non-Greeks.** Barbarians (Greek *barbaros*).

**1:16 salvation.** Not only conversion but also ultimate deliverance from sin, death, and judgment (5:9–10; 13:11). **everyone who believes.** Salvation is offered to all people on the same grounds. An important theme in Romans is including Gentiles as equal participants with Jews in God's new covenant (3:23–24, 29–30; 4:9–12, 16–17; 9:24–26, 30–31; 10:4, 11–13; 15:8–12). **first to the Jew.** Paul insists that Jews still have a prominent place in God's plan of salvation. God directed his word to them first (3:2) and made irrevocable promises to them (9:4–5; 11:28).

**1:17 righteousness of God.** A key concept in Romans (see also 3:5, 21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3 [twice]; cf. Matt 6:33; 2 Cor 5:21; Jas 1:20). Paul takes this language from the OT, where "righteousness of God" denotes God doing what is right or acting to put things right (e.g., 1 Sam 12:7; Pss 7:9; 145:17; Jer 9:24; 11:20; Mic 6:5; see note on 3:21). In dependence on some key prophetic texts (see especially Isa 46:13; 51:5–8), Paul uses the phrase in the latter sense here. In the OT God promised that he would put right, or vindicate, his people Israel (Dt 32:35, 43; Pss

79:10; 135:14; Jer 51:36); now, Paul announces, anyone who believes (v. 16) can experience God's vindication. This vindication is a forensic, or judicial, act that confers on believers the status of "righteousness." While God acts in the gospel of Christ to put people in the right, they experience the benefits of God's activity only when they respond in faith. **by faith from first to last.** Another (less likely) translation would be "from the faith (or faithfulness) of Christ to the faith of believers" (see note on 3:22). **The righteous will live by faith.** Or "the one who is righteous by faith will live." See Hab 2:4. Paul develops the idea of being "righteous by faith" in 3:21–4:25 and the idea of "life" in chs. 5–8.

**1:18–4:25 The Heart of the Gospel: Justification by Faith.** The gospel proclaims that human beings, while locked up under sin, can enter into a saving relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

**1:18–3:20 The Universal Reign of Sin.** Before elaborating "the righteousness of God . . . given through faith" (3:21–22) in 3:21–4:25, Paul explains why God has gone to the extraordinary step of sending his own Son in human form (1:3) to bring good news to the world (1:2, 16): human beings are locked up under sin (3:9). Both Gentiles (1:18–32) and Jews (2:1–3:8) have failed to respond to God's gracious revelation and thus are subject to God's wrath.

**1:18–32 God's Wrath Against Sinful Humanity.** Paul paints a dismal picture of the situation of all human beings (particularly Gentiles) who refuse to worship the true God in order to worship gods of their own making. God reacts (note the threefold "God gave them over" in vv. 24, 26, 28) by consigning people to the sins they have chosen—an expression of his wrath (v. 18).

**1:18 wrath.** The inevitable reaction of a holy God against sin in any form. The OT describes outbreaks of God's wrath within history (e.g., Exod 32:10–12; Num 11:1; Jer 21:3–7) and predicts a final outpouring of wrath at the end of history (e.g., Isa 63:1–6; Mic 5:10–15). **is being revealed.** The ultimate manifestation of God's wrath often features in Paul's teaching (see 2:5), but this refers to the present condition of human beings, who turn away from God's revelation: they stand condemned because of their "godlessness and wickedness."

**1:19–23** God has provided in the world he created evidence of his "eternal power and divine nature" (v. 20). This "natural revelation" is available

them, because God has made it plain to them.<sup>a</sup> <sup>20</sup>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,<sup>b</sup> so that people are without excuse.

<sup>21</sup>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.<sup>c</sup> <sup>22</sup>Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools<sup>d</sup> <sup>23</sup>and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images<sup>e</sup> made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

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

<sup>26</sup>Because of this, God gave them over<sup>k</sup> to shameful lusts.<sup>l</sup> Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.<sup>m</sup> <sup>27</sup>In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.<sup>n</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over<sup>o</sup> to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup>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,<sup>p</sup> <sup>30</sup>slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;<sup>q</sup> <sup>31</sup>they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love,<sup>r</sup> no mercy. <sup>32</sup>Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death,<sup>s</sup> they not only continue to do these very things but also approve<sup>t</sup> of those who practice them.

### God's Righteous Judgment

**2** You, therefore, have no excuse,<sup>u</sup> you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.<sup>v</sup> <sup>2</sup>Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.<sup>3</sup> So

to all human beings, but because of sin, people turn away from this evidence of God. Like the people of Israel when they fashioned the golden calf to worship (Exod 32; cf. Jer 2:11), human beings have "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles" (v. 23). The threefold division of animals alludes to the creation account (Gen 1:28). In the OT idols sometimes took the form of animals, but an idol is anything that a human puts in place of God, and idols take an infinite variety of forms.

**1:24,26,28 God gave them over.** In response to humans' deciding to put idols in the place of the only God, God hands people over to the consequences of their sin. Following the OT and the pattern of Jewish condemnations of the Gentile world (see especially The Wisdom of Solomon 13–15), Paul singles out sexual sins as particularly clear evidence of this turning away from God.

**1:25 worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator.** Succinctly describes the fundamental human sin of idolatry.

**1:26** Paul again follows OT and Jewish tradition in singling out homosexual relations as an especially clear indication of human sinfulness (see especially Gen 19:1–28; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Deut 23:17–18; Sibylline Oracles 3.594–600; The Wisdom of Solomon 14:24–31). **unnatural ones.** Could also be translated "those that are against nature," where "nature" refers to the created world as God intends it to be (see also "abandoned natural relations" in v. 27). In making humans beings male and female (Gen 1:27; 5:2; cf. Gen 2:24), God manifests his intention for human sexual relations.

**1:27 due penalty for their error.** When human beings turn from God's intention for them, they appropriately become subject to God's judgment. This judgment can take many different forms, but the ultimate consequence of all sin is "death" (v. 32) or the "wrath of God" (v. 18).

**1:28 think it worthwhile ... depraved.** Paul uses a play on words to emphasize the equivalence between human sin and God's response:

people chose not to "approve" of God, so he condemned them to an "unapproved" mind — that is, a "worthless" way of thinking that does not conform to God's own purposes and values. The many forms of human sin, which Paul illustrates in vv. 28b–31, are rooted in sinful minds. Fundamental to the new life, therefore, is renewing those very minds (12:2).

**1:32 they know God's righteous decree.** In addition to knowing that God exists and that he is the powerful Creator (v. 20), people also have an inbuilt moral sense that tells them that certain acts deserve God's judgment. **approve.** Approving of sins to which one is not especially prone is in some ways worse than committing the sin itself. Paul may again be reflecting OT ideas and popular Jewish teaching; cf. Testament of Asher 6:2: "The two-faced are doubly punished because they both practice evil and approve of others who practice it; they imitate the spirits of error and join in the struggle against mankind."

**2:1–3:8 Jews Are Accountable to God for Sin.** Having indicted Gentiles for sinfully rejecting God's revelation, Paul shows that Jews have also turned from the even clearer revelation that God gave them.

**2:1–16 God's Righteous Judgment.** Jews, who typically stand in judgment over Gentiles, are in reality doing "the same things" (vv. 1,3) and are therefore also subject to God's wrath. It is this "doing," or "works," that will be the criterion of judgment for both Jew and Gentile.

**2:1 You.** Singular in Greek. Paul uses an ancient literary style called the diatribe, in which writers use a fictional dialogue between themselves and the proponent of another viewpoint to instruct and persuade their audience. Paul may be referring to any self-righteous person but is probably referring to Jews who assumed that God's covenant with them meant automatic protection from judgment. **the same things.** Also in v. 3; in addition to the sins in 1:28b–31, perhaps this includes the Jews' idolatrous tendency to prize the law so highly (see 2:17–24; Phil 3:3–10).

**2:2–4** Both the OT (e.g., Jer 7:1–29) and NT (e.g., Matt 3:7–10)

1:19 <sup>a</sup>Ac 14:17

1:20 <sup>b</sup>Ps 19:1–6

1:21 <sup>c</sup>Jer 2:5; Eph 4:17, 18

1:22 <sup>d</sup>1Co 1:20, 27

1:23 <sup>e</sup>Ps 106:20;

Jer 2:11; Ac 17:29

1:24 <sup>f</sup>Eph 4:19 <sup>g</sup>1Pe 4:3

1:25 <sup>h</sup>Isa 44:20

<sup>i</sup>Jer 10:14 <sup>j</sup>Ro 9:5

1:26 <sup>k</sup>ver 24, 28 <sup>l</sup>1Th 4:5

<sup>m</sup>Lev 18:22, 23

1:27 <sup>n</sup>Lev 18:22; 20:13

1:28 <sup>o</sup>ver 24, 26

1:29 <sup>p</sup>2Co 12:20

1:30 <sup>q</sup>2Ti 3:2

1:31 <sup>r</sup>2Ti 3:3

1:32 <sup>s</sup>Ro 6:23 <sup>t</sup>Ps 50:18;

Lk 11:48; Ac 8:1; 22:20

2:1 <sup>u</sup>Ro 1:20

<sup>v</sup>2Sa 12:5–7; Mt 7:1, 2

2:4 <sup>w</sup>Ro 9:23; Eph 1:7,  
18; 2:7 <sup>x</sup>Ro 11:22  
<sup>y</sup>Ro 3:25 <sup>z</sup>Ex 34:6  
<sup>a</sup>2Pe 3:9  
2:5 <sup>b</sup>Jude 6  
2:6 <sup>c</sup>Ps 62:12; Mt 16:27  
2:7 <sup>d</sup>ver 10 <sup>e</sup>1Co 15:53,  
54  
2:8 <sup>f</sup>2Th 2:12  
2:9 <sup>g</sup>1Pe 4:17  
2:10 <sup>h</sup>ver 9  
2:11 <sup>i</sup>Ac 10:34  
2:12 <sup>j</sup>Ro 3:19; 1Co 9:20,  
21  
2:13 <sup>k</sup>Jas 1:22, 23, 25  
2:14 <sup>l</sup>Ac 10:35  
2:16 <sup>m</sup>Ecc 12:14  
<sup>n</sup>Ac 10:42 <sup>o</sup>Ro 16:25  
2:17 <sup>p</sup>ver 23; Mic 3:11;  
Ro 9:4

when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? <sup>4</sup>Or do you show contempt for the riches<sup>w</sup> of his kindness, <sup>x</sup>forbearance<sup>y</sup> and patience, <sup>z</sup>not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?<sup>a</sup>

<sup>5</sup>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<sup>b</sup> will be revealed. <sup>6</sup>God "will repay each person according to what they have done."<sup>ac</sup> <sup>7</sup>To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor<sup>d</sup> and immortality,<sup>e</sup> he will give eternal life. <sup>8</sup>But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil,<sup>f</sup> there will be wrath and anger. <sup>9</sup>There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile;<sup>g</sup> <sup>10</sup>but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.<sup>h</sup> <sup>11</sup>For God does not show favoritism.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>12</sup>All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law<sup>j</sup> will be judged by the law. <sup>13</sup>For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey<sup>k</sup> the law who will be declared righteous. <sup>14</sup>(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law,<sup>l</sup> they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. <sup>15</sup>They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) <sup>16</sup>This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets<sup>m</sup> through Jesus Christ,<sup>n</sup> as my gospel<sup>o</sup> declares.

### The Jews and the Law

<sup>17</sup>Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God;<sup>p</sup> <sup>18</sup>if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; <sup>19</sup>if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, <sup>20</sup>an instructor of the foolish, a teacher

<sup>a</sup> 6 Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12

condemn the tendency of Jews to think that their special relationship with God will shield them from judgment.

**2:5 day of God's wrath.** While God's wrath is manifested in the present (1:18), it will be decisively and universally revealed on the future day of judgment (Isa 13:13; Zeph 1:15; 1 Thess 1:10).

**2:6–11** This is a particularly clear example of "chiasm" (the word comes from the Greek letter *chi*, formed like our *X*), a literary device in which parallel lines correspond in an *X*-pattern such as *a-b/b'-a'*:

- a* God judges everyone the same (v. 6)
- b* Life is the reward for doing good (v. 7)
- c* Wrath is the penalty for evil (v. 8)
- c'* Wrath for doing evil (v. 9)
- b'* Life for doing good (v. 10)
- a'* God shows no favoritism (v. 11)

**2:6** Paul quotes the OT (Ps 62:12 or Prov 24:12; see also Eccl 12:14; Hos 12:2) to make clear that, for those who are not in Christ, God will judge them according to what they have actually done.

**2:7** Paul's claim that people can gain "eternal life" by "doing good" is the first of several similar assertions in this chapter (vv. 10, 13, 26–27). He may refer to Christians, whose "doing," or "works," will provide critical and necessary evidence of their faith and the transforming power of the Spirit on the day of judgment (2 Cor 5:10; Jas 2:14–26). Or he may refer to people in general, arguing that sincerely and consistently doing good will bring eternal life. But his subsequent argument shows that sin's power prevents every human from living up to this standard (3:9).

**2:9 first for the Jew.** The precedence of Jews, a recurring theme in the letter (e.g., v. 10; 1:16), involves their privilege in receiving the "words of God" (3:2)—whether the outcome is judgment or salvation.

**2:12 law ... law ... law ... law.** Refers in Paul's writings basically to the commanding element of the Torah that God gave to his people Israel through Moses at Sinai (1 Cor 9:9; see Rom 5:13–14; Gal 3:17). So

people who sin "apart from the law" are Gentiles, who did not receive the Mosaic Law.

**2:13 obey.** Jewish teaching stressed the importance of doing the law: "Not the expounding [of the law] is the chief thing, but the doing [of it]" (*Mishnah 'Abot* 1:17; see Jas 1:22). **declared righteous.** See note on v. 7.

**2:14–15** These "Gentiles" (v. 14) may be Gentile Christians, who, though not having the law "by nature" (i.e., by birth), have the law of God "written on their hearts" (v. 15) in accordance with the prophecy of Jer 31:31–34. Alternatively, they may be non-Christian Gentiles who, while not having the Law (of Moses), have knowledge of God's general moral will in their consciences and so, like Jews, have a kind of "law" ("a law for themselves," v. 14). By putting vv. 14–15 in parentheses, the NIV leans toward this second view: Paul qualifies the absolute distinction between those who have the law and those who do not in v. 12. Paul uses "defending" (v. 15), not "saving," because only God's grace in the gospel of Christ saves. If Paul is referring to non-Christian Gentiles, he means that their consciences sometimes witness that they have done things that God requires; at the same time, however, their consciences are also "accusing them" (v. 15).

**2:16 people's secrets.** The hidden things of the heart. "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam 16:7; cf. Ps 139:1–2; Jer 17:10).

**2:17–29 The Jews and the Law.** Addressing his dialogue partner explicitly for the first time as a "Jew" (see note on v. 1), Paul claims that the Jews' reliance on the law (vv. 17–24) and circumcision (vv. 25–29) are futile because they fail to keep the law.

**2:17–20** The list of things that Jews boast in are legitimate sources of pride. God entered into relationship with Israel alone among all the nations, gave them his law, and set them out as a "light" to the nations (e.g., Isa 49:6).

of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth — <sup>21</sup>you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal?<sup>q</sup> <sup>22</sup>You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?<sup>r</sup> <sup>23</sup>You who boast in the law,<sup>s</sup> do you dishonor God by breaking the law? <sup>24</sup>As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”<sup>at</sup>



The half shekel was used to pay the temple tax, and not paying it may have been considered “robbing” the temple (Ro 2:22). This first-century coin was found at the temple mount in 2008.

Z. Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com

2:21 <sup>q</sup>Mt 23:3, 4  
2:22 <sup>r</sup>Ac 19:37  
2:23 <sup>s</sup>ver 17  
2:24 <sup>t</sup>Isa 52:5; Eze 36:22  
2:25 <sup>u</sup>Gal 5:3 <sup>v</sup>Jer 4:4  
2:26 <sup>w</sup>Ro 8:4 <sup>x</sup>1Co 7:19  
2:27 <sup>y</sup>Mt 12:41, 42  
2:28 <sup>z</sup>Mt 3:9; Jn 8:39; Ro 9:6, 7 <sup>a</sup>Gal 6:15  
2:29 <sup>b</sup>Php 3:3; Col 2:11  
<sup>c</sup>Ro 7:6 <sup>d</sup>Jn 5:44;  
1Co 4:5; 2Co 10:18;  
1Th 2:4; 1Pe 3:4  
3:2 <sup>e</sup>Dt 4:8; Ps 147:19  
3:3 <sup>f</sup>Heb 4:2 <sup>g</sup>2Ti 2:13  
3:4 <sup>h</sup>Jn 3:33 <sup>i</sup>Ps 116:11

<sup>25</sup>Circumcision has value if you observe the law,<sup>u</sup> but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.<sup>v</sup> <sup>26</sup>So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements,<sup>w</sup> will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?<sup>x</sup> <sup>27</sup>The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you<sup>y</sup> who, even though you have the<sup>b</sup> written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

<sup>28</sup>A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly,<sup>z</sup> nor is circumcision merely outward and physical.<sup>a</sup> <sup>29</sup>No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit,<sup>b</sup> not by the written code.<sup>c</sup> Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.<sup>d</sup>

### God’s Faithfulness

**3** What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? <sup>2</sup>Much in every way! First of all, the Jews have been entrusted with the very words of God.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>3</sup>What if some were unfaithful?<sup>f</sup> Will their unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness?<sup>g</sup> <sup>4</sup>Not at all! Let God be true,<sup>h</sup> and every human being a liar.<sup>i</sup> As it is written:

<sup>a</sup> <sup>24</sup> Isaiah 52:5 (see Septuagint); Ezek. 36:20,22

<sup>b</sup> <sup>27</sup> Or *who, by means of a*

**2:21 you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?** Although they have the law and teach it to others, the Jews have not consistently obeyed that law (see v. 13). Paul is not claiming that all Jews “steal” (here), “commit adultery” (v. 22), and “rob temples” (v. 22). In dependence on OT prophetic denunciations of Israel (e.g., Jer 7:9), Paul cites examples of behavior that starkly contrasts with the demands of the law God gave them.

**2:24** Paul quotes from Isa 52:5, which refers to the way Israel’s exile and oppression by Gentiles have led people to discredit God himself. In an ironic twist, Paul applies it to Jews failing to live up to their covenant obligations.

**2:25 Circumcision.** God instructed Abraham to circumcise every male in the Israelite household as “the sign of the covenant” (Gen 17:11) that God entered into with Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:9–14). Circumcision became an important distinguishing mark of the people of Israel, gaining special prominence in the aftermath of the attempt of the pagan king Antiochus IV to stamp out the Jewish religion (167–164 BC). Many Jews in Paul’s day lived where they had to struggle to preserve their identity among pagans, so they emphasized outward distinguishing marks of their Jewish faith such as circumcision, dietary rules, and Sabbath observance. **has value if you observe the law.** Again, “doing” is what counts in God’s judgment of humans (see note on v. 7).

**2:26 not circumcised.** Paul again (see note on v. 7) may refer to Christian Gentiles, who “fulfill” the law through faith and the Spirit (see v. 29; 8:4). Alternatively, he may simply be giving the flip side of v. 25: just as Jews who disobey the law lose their status as God’s people, so Gentiles who obey it are given that status. Whether there are Gentiles who, in fact, do fulfill the law is another question.

**2:27,29 the written code.** Or “letter” (Greek *gramma*). Refers to the law

of Moses, exemplified by the Ten Commandments, “written” in letters on the stone tablets that Moses received from God (see 7:6; Exod 31:18; cf. especially 2 Cor 3:3).

**2:29 circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.** Moses called on Israel to “circumcise [their] hearts” (Deut 10:16; see Jer 4:4), i.e., transform themselves in their inner persons so that they might obey God consistently. Ultimately, however, the human heart is so hard that only God can circumcise his people’s hearts. Moses therefore predicted that God would one day do just that (Deut 30:6), and the prophets also stressed that God would one day replace his peoples’ “heart of stone” with a “heart of flesh” by means of the work of his Spirit (Ezek 36:26–27). These promises are fulfilled in the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus’ death and resurrection and marked by the coming of God’s Spirit on his people with power (Acts 2:1–41).

**3:1–8 God’s Faithfulness.** While Jews and Gentiles are on the same footing with respect to God’s ultimate judgment, Jews continue to enjoy the advantage of possessing detailed revelation from God in the OT. Their failure to respond appropriately to that revelation does not cancel God’s faithfulness to his promises—including his promise to punish his people for their sin.

**3:1** Following the diatribe style (see note on 2:1), Paul uses rhetorical questions to advance his argument. Ch. 2 could suggest that Jews no longer have any “advantage” over Gentiles.

**3:2 First of all.** Paul breaks off his list of advantages to comment on the implications of Jews being “entrusted with the very words of God.” See 9:4–5 for a longer list of Jewish privileges.

**3:4 proved right.** Paul quotes David’s confession of his sin of adultery with Bathsheba (Ps 51:4; see 2 Sam 11) to show that God is “in the right” when he punishes his people for their sin.

3:4 <sup>l</sup>Ps 51:4  
 3:5 <sup>k</sup>Ro 6:19; Gal 3:15  
 3:6 <sup>i</sup>Ge 18:25  
 3:7 <sup>m</sup>ver 4  
 3:8 <sup>n</sup>Ro 6:1  
 3:9 <sup>a</sup>ver 19, 23; Gal 3:22  
 3:12 <sup>p</sup>Ps 14:1-3  
 3:13 <sup>q</sup>Ps 5:9 <sup>r</sup>Ps 140:3  
 3:14 <sup>s</sup>Ps 10:7  
 3:18 <sup>t</sup>Ps 36:1  
 3:19 <sup>u</sup>Jn 10:34 <sup>v</sup>Ro 2:12

“So that you may be proved right when you speak  
 and prevail when you judge.”<sup>dj</sup>

<sup>5</sup>But if our unrighteousness brings out God’s righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.)<sup>k</sup> <sup>6</sup>Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?<sup>l</sup> <sup>7</sup>Someone might argue, “If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness and so increases his glory,<sup>m</sup> why am I still condemned as a sinner?” <sup>8</sup>Why not say — as some slanderously claim that we say — “Let us do evil that good may result?”<sup>n</sup> Their condemnation is just!

### No One Is Righteous

<sup>9</sup>What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.<sup>o</sup> <sup>10</sup>As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;  
<sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands;  
 there is no one who seeks God.  
<sup>12</sup> All have turned away,  
 they have together become worthless;  
 there is no one who does good,  
 not even one.”<sup>bp</sup>  
<sup>13</sup> “Their throats are open graves;  
 their tongues practice deceit.”<sup>cq</sup>  
 “The poison of vipers is on their lips.”<sup>dr</sup>  
<sup>14</sup> “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”<sup>es</sup>  
<sup>15</sup> “Their feet are swift to shed blood;  
<sup>16</sup> ruin and misery mark their ways,  
<sup>17</sup> and the way of peace they do not know.”<sup>f</sup>  
<sup>18</sup> “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”<sup>gt</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Now we know that whatever the law says,<sup>u</sup> it says to those who are under the law,<sup>v</sup> so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup>Therefore no one will be de-

<sup>a</sup> 4 Psalm 51:4    <sup>b</sup> 12 Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccles. 7:20    <sup>c</sup> 13 Psalm 5:9    <sup>d</sup> 13 Psalm 140:3  
<sup>e</sup> 14 Psalm 10:7 (see Septuagint)    <sup>f</sup> 17 Isaiah 59:7,8    <sup>g</sup> 18 Psalm 36:1

**3:5 God’s righteousness.** Can refer to God’s acting to put his people “in the right” (see 1:17 and note) but also, as here, to his acting in accordance with his own nature and revelation. God is “in the right,” or just, even when he inflicts wrath on his people because as a holy God he must punish sinfulness.

**3:6 judge the world.** See Gen 18:25: “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

**3:8 as some slanderously claim.** As the “apostle to the Gentiles” (11:13), Paul was thrust into the center of controversy, and false rumors about his teaching were evidently circulating in Rome. **Let us do evil that good may result.** Paul’s claim that a person is justified by faith alone sounds to some as if he is opening the door to unrestrained behavior. He simply dismisses this unfounded charge here, but he deals with it in more detail in ch. 6.

**3:9–20 No One Is Righteous.** Paul’s indictment of both Gentiles (1:18–32) and Jews (2:1 — 3:8) climaxes in this summary that portrays both as helpless under sin’s power (v. 9) and thus unable to escape from its clutches by their own efforts (v. 20).

**3:9 Do we have any advantage?** “We” probably refers to Jews. Even though Jews have a certain “advantage” in possessing “the very words of God” (v. 2), they do not have any ultimate advantage over Gentiles when it comes to salvation and damnation. **under the power of sin.** Throughout Romans, Paul refers to sin in the singular

to make the point that the many sins people commit stem from a single, basic fact: they are helpless slaves to sin’s power. This fundamental human predicament is matched by God’s work in Christ to break through sin and liberate humans, who are enslaved to it (3:24; 6:1–23).

**3:10–18** Paul uses five quotations from different parts of the OT to underline that sin is universal. It is possible, though by no means certain, that early Christians gathered together this series of references before Paul’s ministry began. It echoes a Jewish practice called “pearl-stringing,” citing OT texts on a particular theme. The series is framed by quotations using the opening words “there is no” to show that all people, without exception, are caught in sin’s power (vv. 10, 11, 12, 18). In between, quotations focus on the evidence of sin in human speaking (vv. 13–14) and general lifestyle (vv. 15–17).

**3:19 law.** The entire OT. Paul usually uses “law” to refer to the commandments given to Israel at Sinai, but the prominence of this body of legislation for the life of Israel meant that the “law” could also refer to the OT Scriptures as a whole (see 1 Cor 9:8–9; 14:21, 34; Gal 4:21b–22). **those who are under the law.** Jews, to whom God gave the Mosaic Law (see 2:12). **the whole world held accountable to God.** If the OT brands God’s own people as sinful, how much more are Gentiles also guilty?

**3:20 works of the law.** Whatever a human being does in obeying God’s

clared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law;<sup>w</sup> rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.<sup>x</sup>

### Righteousness Through Faith

<sup>21</sup>But now apart from the law the righteousness of God<sup>y</sup> has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.<sup>z</sup> <sup>22</sup>This righteousness is given through faith<sup>a</sup> in<sup>a</sup> Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,<sup>b</sup> <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and all are justified freely by his grace<sup>c</sup> through the redemption<sup>d</sup> that came by Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup>God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement,<sup>be</sup> through the shedding of his blood<sup>f</sup> — to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished<sup>g</sup> — <sup>26</sup>he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

<sup>27</sup>Where, then, is boasting?<sup>h</sup> It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No,

<sup>a</sup> 22 Or *through the faithfulness of*    <sup>b</sup> 25 The Greek for *sacrifice of atonement* refers to the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant (see Lev. 16:15,16).

<sup>3:20</sup> <sup>w</sup>Ac 13:39; Gal 2:16  
<sup>x</sup>Ro 7:7

<sup>3:21</sup> <sup>y</sup>Ro 1:17; 9:30  
<sup>z</sup>Ac 10:43

<sup>3:22</sup> <sup>a</sup>Ro 9:30  
<sup>b</sup>Ro 10:12; Gal 3:28;  
Col 3:11

<sup>3:24</sup> <sup>c</sup>Ro 4:16; Eph 2:8  
<sup>d</sup>Eph 1:7,14; Col 1:14;  
Heb 9:12

<sup>3:25</sup> <sup>e</sup>1Jn 4:10  
<sup>f</sup>Heb 9:12,14 <sup>g</sup>Ac 17:30

<sup>3:27</sup> <sup>h</sup>Ro 2:17,23; 4:2;  
1Co 1:29-31; Eph 2:9

law (see also v. 28; Gal 2:16 [three times]; 3:2,5,10). **through the law.** The law of Moses. But the relationship between “works of the law” and “works” in general elsewhere in Romans (4:2,4,6; 9:12; 11:6) indicates that Paul’s claim includes ultimately anything humans do. God’s verdict of “righteous” cannot come through human doing of any kind, but only by faith (3:22; 4:1–8).

**3:21 — 4:25 Justification by Faith.** Paul develops the theme of God’s righteousness (3:21–26) announced in 1:17, and he elaborates on why faith is important, first generally (3:27–31) and then with reference to Abraham (4:1–25).

**3:21–31 Righteousness Through Faith.** In one of the most important theological sections in the Bible, Paul explains that (1) God’s righteousness involves his completely gracious justification of any person who puts their faith in Christ; (2) this justification is based on Christ’s sacrificial death; and (3) the nature of Christ’s death enables God to remain just even as he justifies sinful humans. Paul then elaborates on the importance of faith, a key element in vv. 21–26.

**3:21 But now.** With these two simple words, Paul conveys the incredibly good news that a new era, in which “the righteousness of God has been made known,” has begun. **apart from the law ... to which the Law and the Prophets testify.** In a balance typical of Romans, Paul insists that God’s new work in Christ breaks new ground in God’s plan (it moves beyond the era of the old covenant and its law) but is what God has all along planned to do (the whole OT testifies to it).

**3:22 faith in.** Could also be translated “the faithfulness of” (see NIV text note), referring to Jesus’ obeying the will of the Father in going to the cross for sinful humanity (see 5:19; Phil 2:8). But Paul’s emphasis throughout this context on human believing (as in the case of Abraham in ch. 4) favors the NIV rendering. In this case, Paul adds the phrase “to all who believe” to emphasize a key point in his argument: as all humans are caught up in sin (v. 23; 1:18 — 3:20), so God’s righteousness is available for all humans, Jew and Gentile alike (see 1:16).

**3:24 all are justified.** “All” is not in the Greek text but is carried over from v. 23. Justification is an important Pauline theological teaching. Paul uses the verb for “justify” (Greek *dikaioō*) 25 times, primarily in Romans (15 times) and Galatians (6 times). In addition, many of the occurrences of the related word for “righteousness” (Greek *dikaioσύνη*) relate to the doctrine of justification (Paul uses this noun 56 times, 32 times in Romans and 4 times in Galatians). “Justify” language is taken from the world of a court of law and refers to a declaration of status, not to moral transformation. Justification has a negative and a positive side: God no longer holds our sins against us in his judgment (see 4:8), and he gives us a righteous standing before him. **freely by his grace.** Whatever God does for us humans is done

in grace (see also 4:4–5; 5:1). **grace.** “Grace” is a thread that runs throughout Romans. The display of God’s grace in the gospel is rooted in the character of God himself. As 4:4–5 makes clear, no human can ever make a claim on God because of anything they have done (see also 11:5–6). A holy God can never be indebted to his creatures. Whatever he gives us, therefore, he gives “freely” and without compulsion (see also 4:16). Not only is grace needed at the beginning of the Christian life, but believers “stand” in grace (5:2): we live in the realm in which grace “reign[s]” (5:21; see also 5:15,17,20). That reign of grace, Paul hastens to make clear, does not absolve us of the need to live righteously before God; rather, it gives us the power to do so (6:1,14–15,17). So interwoven is grace in this new era of salvation that Paul can even speak of his own ministry (1:5; 12:3; 15:15) and the ministry of believers generally (12:6) as a matter of “grace.” It is quite appropriate, therefore, that Romans is framed by prayers that God’s people might fully experience this grace of God (1:7; 16:20). **redemption.** Referred in Paul’s day to paying money to secure a slave’s freedom. In Christ, God has paid a price to secure the release of every believer from sin’s slavery (v. 9). The OT uses “redemption” to refer to the exodus: God intervened to release his people Israel from their slavery in Egypt (Ps 111:9; cf. Ex 6:6; 15:13). Christ’s death provides a new, spiritual “exodus” for the people of God.

**3:25 sacrifice of atonement.** Greek *hilastērion*, which refers to the “atonement cover” in Heb 9:5 and most of its occurrences in the Greek OT. This “atonement cover” was a plate that covered the ark of the covenant law in the inner sanctuary (the Most Holy Place) of the OT tabernacle. It figures prominently in the Day of Atonement ritual (Lev 16:2,13–15) and came to signify the place where God deals with his people’s sins. Christ, on the cross, is now the final and definitive “place” where God deals with the sins of his people. As in the OT ritual, Christ’s sacrifice is propitiatory; i.e., it functions, among other things, to satisfy God’s wrath against sin (1:18; 2:5; 1 John 2:2). **his righteousness.** Perhaps, as in vv. 21–22, God’s act of putting people “in the right” or even God’s covenant faithfulness. But, more likely, it refers to God’s own attribute of “justness”: God’s failure to punish past sins with the wrath they deserved (as in the case of the OT believers) created the perception that God was not being fully just, a problem that Christ’s sacrificial death on behalf of all God’s people fully answers.

**3:26 just and the one who justifies.** Succinctly summarizes the two key themes in the paragraph: Christ’s sacrificial death enables God to (1) justify sinful people (2) while he remains just.

**3:27 law that requires faith.** Perhaps the OT law, which, in the broad sense of the Pentateuch, calls for faith (e.g., Gen 15:6; cf. Rom 4); or perhaps, in a play on words, the “law,” or “principle,” of faith (v. 28) in contrast to the law of Moses that calls for works.

3:28 <sup>1</sup>ver 20, 21;  
Ac 13:39; Eph 2:9

3:29 <sup>1</sup>Ro 9:24

3:30 <sup>1</sup>Gal 3:8

4:2 <sup>1</sup>1Co 1:31

4:3 <sup>1</sup>ver 5, 9, 22;  
Ge 15:6; Gal 3:6;  
Jas 2:23

4:4 <sup>1</sup>Ro 11:6

4:8 <sup>1</sup>Ps 32:1, 2; 2Co 5:19

4:9 <sup>1</sup>Ro 3:30 <sup>1</sup>ver 3

4:11 <sup>1</sup>Ge 17:10, 11

<sup>1</sup>ver 16, 17; Lk 19:9

<sup>1</sup>Ro 3:22

because of the law that requires faith. <sup>28</sup>For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. <sup>29</sup>Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, <sup>30</sup>since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. <sup>31</sup>Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

### Abraham Justified by Faith

**4** What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? <sup>2</sup>If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about — but not before God. <sup>3</sup>What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” <sup>am</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift <sup>n</sup> but as an obligation. <sup>5</sup>However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.

<sup>6</sup>David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

<sup>7</sup>“Blessed are those  
whose transgressions are forgiven,  
whose sins are covered.

<sup>8</sup>Blessed is the one  
whose sin the Lord will never count against them.” <sup>bo</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? <sup>p</sup>We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. <sup>q</sup><sup>10</sup>Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! <sup>11</sup>And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. <sup>r</sup>So then, he is the father <sup>s</sup> of all who believe <sup>t</sup> but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. <sup>12</sup>And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

<sup>a</sup> 3 Gen. 15:6; also in verse 22 <sup>b</sup> 8 Psalm 32:1,2

**3:28 works of the law.** See note on v. 20.

**3:30 there is only one God.** Paul argues that the central Jewish confession in the “oneness” of God, the “Shema” (Deut 6:4; cf. 1 Cor 8:4; Gal 3:20; Jas 2:19), means that Gentiles and Jews must have access to this one God—and on the same basis: by faith.

**3:31 we uphold the law.** Paul’s teaching may uphold the law by (1) reasserting its condemning function (vv. 19–20), (2) insisting that the OT testifies to justification by faith (v. 21; see Gen 15:6; cf. Rom 4), or (3) maintaining the need for the law’s commands to be fulfilled—by Christ, our representative (v. 25; see 8:4).

**4:1–25 Abraham Justified by Faith.** Paul uses Abraham to elaborate three of the key points he makes about faith generally in 3:27–31: (1) Faith excludes “boasting” (vv. 1–2; cf. 3:27). (2) Faith must be distinguished from works, from the effort to please God by what we do (vv. 3–8; cf. 3:28). (3) Faith brings Gentiles and Jews together into one family of God (vv. 9–17; cf. 3:29–30). Paul concludes by movingly describing the nature of Abraham’s faith (vv. 18–25). A recurring thread in Paul’s discussion is referring to the key verse Gen 15:6 (see vv. 3, 9, 22). God’s promise to Abraham was a foundational event in God’s unfolding plan to create a people for himself and to reassert his sovereignty over all creation (Gen 12–22). Some Jewish interpretations stressed Abraham’s fidelity to the law, but Paul focuses on Abraham’s faith in response to the promise of God—a faith, to be sure, that issued in works of righteousness (see also Heb 11:8–12, 17–19; Jas 2:21–23). **4:1–8** Abraham has nothing to boast about before God because his status before God is nothing he earned but is God’s gift in response to his faith.

**4:1 our forefather according to the flesh.** While Abraham was physically (“according to the flesh”) the ancestor of the Jewish people, he is, in a spiritual sense, “the father of all who believe” (v. 11).

**4:3** Paul quotes Gen 15:6, which describes how God graciously considered Abraham’s faith (in response to God’s promise [cf. Gen 15:1–5]) to fulfill all that God expected of him. This connection between faith and righteousness is the heart of Paul’s argument in 3:21–4:25.

**4:5 God who justifies the ungodly.** A justly famous claim about the nature of God’s justification of sinful humans. God does not justify people who believe they have earned their righteousness, as in the case of an employer who is obliged to pay employees for the work they have done. Rather, God justifies people who are, in themselves, ungodly, illustrating that justification is by grace alone.

**4:6–8** Following Jewish methods of citing Scripture, Paul confirms his claim based on “the law” (see 3:27 and note), or the Pentateuch (v. 3, which quotes Gen 15:6), with the Prophets and the Writings—in this case, from Ps 32:1–2. **credits . . . count.** Translates the same Greek word rendered “credited” in vv. 3–5, connecting Ps 32:1–2 with Gen 15:6. But more important is the conceptual parallel: righteousness before God and forgiveness of sins are gracious gifts of God.

**4:9–12** The argument of this brief paragraph rests on simple chronology: God instituted the rite of circumcision as a “sign of the covenant” (Gen 17:11) at least 13 years (29 years in Jewish tradition) after God accepted Abraham because of his faith (see also Gal 3:15–18). In his own person, then, Abraham is qualified to be the “father of all who

<sup>13</sup>It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise<sup>u</sup> that he would be heir of the world,<sup>v</sup> but through the righteousness that comes by faith. <sup>14</sup>For if those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless,<sup>w</sup> <sup>15</sup>because the law brings wrath.<sup>x</sup> And where there is no law there is no transgression.<sup>y</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace<sup>z</sup> and may be guaranteed<sup>a</sup> to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. <sup>17</sup>As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations."<sup>ab</sup> He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed — the God who gives life<sup>c</sup> to the dead and calls<sup>d</sup> into being things that were not.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations,<sup>f</sup> just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be."<sup>bg</sup> <sup>19</sup>Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead<sup>h</sup> — since he was about a hundred years old<sup>i</sup> — and that Sarah's womb was also dead.<sup>j</sup> <sup>20</sup>Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,<sup>k</sup> <sup>21</sup>being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. <sup>22</sup>This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."<sup>m</sup> <sup>23</sup>The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, <sup>24</sup>but also for us,<sup>n</sup> to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him<sup>o</sup> who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.<sup>p</sup> <sup>25</sup>He was delivered over to death for our sins<sup>q</sup> and was raised to life for our justification.

<sup>a</sup> 17 Gen. 17:5    <sup>b</sup> 18 Gen. 15:5

<sup>4:13</sup> <sup>u</sup> Gal 3:16, 29

<sup>v</sup> Ge 17:4–6

<sup>4:14</sup> <sup>w</sup> Gal 3:18

<sup>4:15</sup> <sup>x</sup> Ro 7:7–25;

1Co 15:56; 2Co 3:7;

Gal 3:10; Ro 7:12

<sup>y</sup> Ro 3:20; 7:7

<sup>4:16</sup> <sup>z</sup> Ro 3:24 <sup>a</sup> Ro 15:8

<sup>4:17</sup> <sup>b</sup> Ge 17:5 <sup>c</sup> Jn 5:21

<sup>d</sup> Isa 48:13 <sup>e</sup> 1Co 1:28

<sup>4:18</sup> <sup>f</sup> ver 17 <sup>g</sup> Ge 15:5

<sup>4:19</sup> <sup>h</sup> Heb 11:11, 12

<sup>i</sup> Ge 17:17 <sup>j</sup> Ge 18:11

<sup>4:20</sup> <sup>k</sup> Mt 9:8

<sup>4:21</sup> <sup>l</sup> Ge 18:14;

Heb 11:19

<sup>4:22</sup> <sup>m</sup> ver 3

<sup>4:24</sup> <sup>n</sup> Ro 15:4; 1Co 9:10;

10:11 <sup>o</sup> Ro 10:9 <sup>p</sup> Ac 2:24

<sup>4:25</sup> <sup>q</sup> Isa 53:5, 6;

Ro 5:6, 8

believe" (v. 11): both Gentiles who come to faith without being circumcised and Jews who believe while being circumcised.

**4:13–17** Paul continues to use Abraham's experience to make a point that is vital to his overall purpose in Romans: to make clear to the squabbling Gentile and Jewish Christians in Rome (chs. 14–15) that they are united through their common faith in the God who always intended to create a worldwide people.

**4:13 not through the law.** In Gal 3:15–18, Paul points out that God gave the law of Moses "430 years" (Gal 3:17) after his promise to Abraham. Here Paul focuses on the law's intrinsic inability to bring sinful humans into the state of righteousness. **heir of the world.** The OT focuses on the land of Israel as the "inheritance" that Abraham and his descendants would receive (Gen 12:7; 13:14–15; 15:7, 18–21; 17:8; see Exod 32:13). But from the beginning, God promised that Abraham would be the means by which "all peoples on earth [would] be blessed" (Gen 12:3). Later parts of the OT (e.g., Isa 11:10–14; 55:3–5) and some Jewish traditions (Sirach 44:21; Jubilees 19:21; 2 Baruch 14:13; 51:3) stress that God's promise to Abraham and his descendants is universal. Paul, reflecting certain OT texts (e.g., Isa 65:17–25), pushes this universalization further, suggesting that the entire cosmos has replaced the promise of a particular land on this earth (see the language of "new creation" in 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; see also the "new heaven" and "new earth" of Rev 21:1–5).

**4:15 the law brings wrath.** Sinful humans cannot fulfill God's good and holy law (7:12). The law cannot liberate sinners from their helplessness but simply confirms that they, indeed, fall far short of God's expectations (see also 3:20; 5:20; 7:7–11). **transgression.** Greek *parabasis*; specifically violating a law or commandment that one is formally responsible to obey (see also 2:23; 5:14; Gal 3:19; 1 Tim 2:14). The law, then, brings wrath down on God's people because it formally and in detail spells out their responsibility to honor God — a responsibility that sin prevents them from discharging.

**4:16 not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham.** The reference may be to two groups: Jews in general, who still enjoy the benefits of God's promises (11:1–2, 28), and Christians, who share Abraham's faith. But Paul more likely has in view Jewish Christians: those who are "of the law" and who also believe.

**4:17 many nations.** Gen 17:5 (which Paul quotes here) probably includes Gentiles; Paul certainly applies it this way. **the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.** Paul probably intends four related ideas: (1) "Calls into being things that were not" alludes to God's creating all things from nothing (*ex nihilo*; cf. Isa 41:4; 48:13). (2) Jews used the phrase "gives life to the dead" to refer to conversion from paganism (especially in the book Joseph and Aseneth). (3) God gave "life" to the "dead" body of Abraham and the "dead" womb of Sarah in the miraculous birth of Isaac (v. 19). (4) God also gave "life" to the dead body of Jesus by raising him from the dead (v. 24).

**4:18–25** Abraham believed "against all hope" (v. 18), i.e., in the face of contrary "evidence," and "in hope" (v. 18), i.e., by resting on the hope of God's sure promise. His faith in a God who brings life from the dead is then a paradigm for Christians, who also believe in a God who brought life to the dead body of Jesus.

**4:20 he did not waver through unbelief.** This claim appears to be in tension with Abraham's laughter when he heard God's promise about having a son (Gen 17:17). Some Jewish and Christian interpreters have interpreted his laughter as a joyful response to God's promise, but the text of Genesis, which in fact makes clear Abraham's failings, does not support this reading. Paul is probably generalizing, referring to the basic course of Abraham's life (see especially the remarkable demonstration of Abraham's faith in Gen 22)

**4:24 us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.** Christians, like Abraham, believe in a God who "gives life to the dead" (v. 17). Abraham looked ahead to the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises (Heb 11:13). Christians can look ahead to this consummation with even greater assurance because we also look back at the climactic fulfillment of God's promises in Jesus.

**4:25 delivered over to death for our sins.** See Isa 53:5–6, 8, 12. **raised to life for our justification.** As Jesus' own resurrection was his "justification," or vindication (1 Tim 3:16), so we, who are "alive" and "raised with Christ" (Col 2:13; 3:1; see Rom 6:5, 8; Eph 2:5, 6), are justified with him. The two-part parallel saying in v. 25 might be an early Christian confessional formula.

5:1 <sup>1</sup>Ro 3:28  
 5:2 <sup>2</sup>Eph 2:18 <sup>1</sup>1Co 15:1  
<sup>3</sup>Heb 3:6  
 5:3 <sup>4</sup>Mt 5:12 <sup>5</sup>Jas 1:2, 3  
 5:5 <sup>6</sup>Php 1:20 <sup>7</sup>Ac 2:33  
 5:6 <sup>8</sup>Gal 4:4 <sup>9</sup>Ro 4:25  
 5:8 <sup>10</sup>Jn 15:13; 1Pe 3:18  
 5:9 <sup>11</sup>Ro 3:25 <sup>12</sup>Ro 1:18  
 5:10 <sup>13</sup>Ro 11:28; Col 1:21  
<sup>14</sup>2Co 5:18, 19; Col 1:20;  
<sup>15</sup>22 <sup>16</sup>Ro 8:34  
 5:12 <sup>17</sup>ver 15, 16, 17;  
 1Co 15:21, 22 <sup>18</sup>Ge 2:17;  
 3:19; Ro 6:23

## Peace and Hope

**5** Therefore, since we have been justified through faith,<sup>1</sup> we<sup>a</sup> have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have gained access<sup>s</sup> by faith into this grace in which we now stand.<sup>4</sup> And we<sup>b</sup> boast in the hope<sup>u</sup> of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>Not only so, but we<sup>b</sup> also glory in our sufferings,<sup>v</sup> because we know that suffering produces perseverance;<sup>w</sup> <sup>4</sup>perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup>And hope<sup>x</sup> does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit,<sup>y</sup> who has been given to us.

<sup>6</sup>You see, at just the right time,<sup>z</sup> when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.<sup>a</sup> <sup>7</sup>Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Since we have now been justified by his blood,<sup>c</sup> how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath<sup>d</sup> through him! <sup>10</sup>For if, while we were God's enemies,<sup>e</sup> we were reconciled<sup>f</sup> to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!<sup>9</sup> <sup>11</sup>Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

## Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man,<sup>h</sup> and death through sin,<sup>i</sup> and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

<sup>a</sup> 1 Many manuscripts *let us*      <sup>b</sup> 2,3 Or *let us*

**5:1—8:39** *The Assurance Provided by the Gospel: The Hope of Salvation.* The first half of Romans (chs. 1–8) is sometimes divided between chs. 1–5 (“justification”) and chs. 6–8 (“sanctification”), but the sequence of thought makes better sense with the transition occurring between chs. 4 and 5. The first main part (1:18—4:25) focuses on right standing with God (“righteousness,” “justification”), and the second main part (chs. 5–8) describes the benefits that those who have attained this right standing enjoy. Paul’s argument in chs. 5–8 follows a general chiasmic pattern (*a-b-c / c-b-c*):

- a* Believers can be confident of final glory (5:1–11)
- b* Because believers are in Christ rather than in Adam (condemnation) (5:12–21)
- c* Believers are set free from the power of sin (6:1–23)
- c* Believers are set free from the binding authority of the law (7:1–25)
- b* Believers are free from condemnation because of the Spirit’s work (8:1–17)
- a* Therefore, believers can be confident of final glory (8:18–39)

**5:1–21** *The Hope of Glory.* Faith joins believers to Jesus Christ, the “second Adam” (see v. 14; 1 Cor 15:21–22, 45 and notes; see also note on vv. 12–21), and because of that relationship believers can be certain that they will be saved on the day of judgment.

**5:1–11** *Peace and Hope.* Because we have been justified by faith, we enjoy the benefit of peace with God (reconciliation) in the present (vv. 1, 11) and have a secure hope that, despite the trials we face in this life (vv. 3–4), God’s love and his work for us in Christ and the Spirit will save us from God’s wrath on the day of judgment (vv. 5–10) and bring us to glory (v. 2).

**5:1** *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith.* Summarizes the central argument of the first part of the letter (1:18—4:25) and transitions to the second main section (5:1—8:39). **we have.** Makes better sense in this context than “let us have” (see NIV text note). **peace with God.** Not the subjective feeling of the peace of God, but the objective state of being at peace with God. The enmity that characterizes the relationship between God and his sinful, rebellious creatures is ended for those who are justified by faith (see also vv. 10–11; Eph 2:16; Col 1:21–22).

**5:2** *this grace in which we now stand.* While God has always acted

toward humans in grace, the new era of salvation is especially characterized by an effusion of God’s grace (see also John 1:17). **hope of the glory of God.** The hope that God will glorify us. This future glory that God promises to believers brackets chs. 5–8 (see 8:18, 30). This use of “glory” reflects how the OT uses the Hebrew *kābōd* to depict God’s “weighty” nature: his honor, majesty, and overwhelming presence (Deut 28:58; Ps 22:23; Isa 26:15; Ezek 39:13). Sinful humans “fall short” of God’s glory (3:23), but in accordance with the prophetic promise (Isa 60:1–2), believers are promised a share in that glory.

**5:3–4** The road to glory is strewn with rocks and strange turns. But far from lessening our hope, these “sufferings” (v. 3), in God’s providence, become the means of strengthening us and thus deepening our hope.

**5:5** *put us to shame.* In the OT, “shame” sometimes refers to a negative verdict in the judgment of God (e.g., Pss 6:9–10; 25:3; 119:80; Isa 28:16; 45:16; 45:24; Jer 7:13). Believers need not fear this outcome “because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” Paul is alluding to Joel 2:28–32, which promises an outpouring of God’s Spirit (see Acts 2:17–21).

**5:6** *at just the right time.* The time God had determined was the appropriate time for him to fulfill his promises (see Gal 4:4: “when the set time had fully come”; cf. Mark 1:15).

**5:7** *righteous person ... good person.* Perhaps the distinction is between an upright, law-abiding person and a person who is good to us.

**5:8** God not only enables us, through his Spirit, to feel his love in our hearts (v. 5), but he also powerfully demonstrates his love for us by sending his Son to die on our behalf.

**5:9–10** Paul signals the importance of what he says here by saying the same basic thing twice: God’s initial work in justifying and reconciling sinful people to himself shows that he will surely complete his work by saving those same people from his wrath at the time of his judgment.

**shall we be saved ... shall we be saved.** Ultimate deliverance from temptation, sin, and death, as is often found in Paul’s letters (see 1:16; 13:11; 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 1:6; Phil 1:19, 28; 2:12; 1 Thess 5:9; 1 Tim 2:15; 4:16; 2 Tim 4:18).

**5:12–21** *Death Through Adam, Life Through Christ.* The basic building block of this passage is comparing (“just as ... so also”) Adam and Christ (vv. 12, 18, 19, 21). Each is a key figure in redemptive history whose acts have ultimate significance for all whom they represent.

<sup>13</sup>To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law.<sup>i</sup> <sup>14</sup>Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.<sup>k</sup>

<sup>15</sup>But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man,<sup>l</sup> how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ,<sup>m</sup> overflow to the many! <sup>16</sup>Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. <sup>17</sup>For if, by the trespass of the one man, death<sup>n</sup> reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

<sup>18</sup>Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people,<sup>o</sup> so also one righteous act resulted in justification<sup>p</sup> and life for all people. <sup>19</sup>For just as through the disobedience of the one man<sup>q</sup> the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience<sup>r</sup> of the one man the many will be made righteous.

<sup>20</sup>The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase.<sup>s</sup> But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,<sup>t</sup> <sup>21</sup>so that, just as sin reigned in death,<sup>u</sup> so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

5:13<sup>l</sup> Ro 4:15

5:14<sup>k</sup> 1Co 15:22, 45

5:15<sup>j</sup> ver 12, 18, 19

<sup>m</sup> Ac 15:11

5:17<sup>n</sup> ver 12

5:18<sup>o</sup> ver 12 <sup>p</sup> Ro 4:25

5:19<sup>q</sup> ver 12 <sup>r</sup> Php 2:8

5:20<sup>s</sup> Ro 7:7, 8; Gal 3:19

<sup>t</sup> 1Ti 1:13, 14

5:21<sup>u</sup> ver 12, 14

Adam's sin, which brought death and condemnation to all humans, is more than made up for by Christ's obedience, which brings righteousness and life to all who receive God's gracious gift.

**5:12** This forms a chiasm (see note on 2:6–11):

- a Sin enters
- b Death results
- b' Death comes to all
- a' Because all sinned

**Therefore.** Could also be rendered "In order to accomplish this," with "this" referring to vv. 1–11. According to this view, Paul is arguing that our confidence in salvation (vv. 9–10) is based on our belonging to the "second Adam," Jesus Christ (see note on 5:1–21). **sin entered the world through one man.** Paul assumes that his readers know the tragic story of the fall of the original humans (Gen 3). **death through sin.** As God warned Adam and Eve (Gen 2:17), death followed in the wake of sin. The parallel between this verse and v. 18 suggests that "death" refers mainly to spiritual death, or "condemnation"—although physical death, at least in its painful side, may be included as well. **all sinned.** When and how this took place is debated. At first it might seem that Paul means simply that all humans die because all humans, in their own persons, commit sin. But the parallel passages in vv. 18a, 19a stress the significance of the "one trespass" by the "one man," Adam. We can reconcile these emphases if we understand that Adam's one sin led to all humans becoming subject to sin's power, leading inevitably to their own sinning. But it is also possible that Paul is viewing Adam as a representative figure, whose own sin is, at the same time, the sin of all human beings. The OT assumes the "corporate" significance of key individuals (e.g., Achan's sin is also the sin of Israel [Josh 7:1, 11]; see also Heb 7:9–10).

**5:13–14** Paul does not finish the sentence he began in v. 12 (the dash at the end of v. 12 indicates this break). He turns aside from his main argument to deal with a related matter. He may simply be emphasizing that death is universal: even people who lived before God gave the Mosaic law were subject to death. But Paul may be providing evidence for the "representative" reading of v. 12: even people who did not directly violate a commandment (as Adam did in the Garden of Eden and the Israelites did after God gave the law) suffered the penalty of death, and only their participation in Adam's sin can finally explain this.

**5:14 pattern.** Greek *typos*, from which we get the word "typology." Adam is a "type" of Christ, "the one to come." God has designed the history of salvation in such a way that OT events, persons, and places

foreshadow NT events, persons, and places. The way Adam represents humans points ahead to the way Christ represents believers.

**5:15–16** In one sense Adam's sin and Christ's obedience are comparable. But in another sense they are very different: God is at work in his grace through Christ, so Christ's act of obedience more than cancels the long history of human sins and their consequences.

**5:15 many ... one.** "Many" contrasts with "one." Only context indicates whether "many" includes everyone. Paul clearly teaches that all humans are bound up with Adam's sin and death, so "many died" must mean "all died." But Paul equally clearly teaches that only believers fully benefit from Christ's work, so "the many" who experience the grace of Christ cannot be universal.

**5:17 those who receive.** Read in isolation from the rest of Scripture, vv. 18–19 could suggest that just as all humans have been condemned in Adam, so all humans will have eternal life in Christ. But this verse qualifies that universalism (i.e., that "all people" will be saved) by emphasizing *receiving* the gift: only those who respond in faith (3:21—4:25) eternally benefit from Christ's act of obedience. Both Adam and Jesus are representatives of humans: Adam represents all, Jesus represents all who receive God's gift.

**5:18 one righteous act.** Christ's obeying the Father's will in going to the cross. **justification and life for all people.** See note on v. 17. Paul might mean that Christ has in principle made it possible for all human beings to experience justification and life (cf. "those who receive," v. 17). But he might be referring simply to "all people" who are in Christ in contrast to "all people" who are in Adam.

**5:19 made sinners.** Or possibly "considered to be sinners" (e.g., "condemned," as in the parallel v. 18). **made righteous.** Not transformed into people who act righteously, but considered to be righteous in the judicial sense (see note on 3:24).

**5:20 so that the trespass might increase.** One of the reasons that God gave the Mosaic law was to reveal the extent of human sin and the need for new measures to deal with that sin. By multiplying commandments, the law provides many more opportunities for disobeying God (see 3:20; 4:15; 7:7–12; Gal 3:19).

**5:21** While vv. 12–21 are very important verses about "original sin," they focus on (as the last clause makes clear) the incredibly powerful effects of Christ's "one righteous act" (v. 18). **through righteousness.** As a result of being justified. Believers, who belong to Christ, can be sure that God's grace reigns over them: their present state of right standing before God will certainly result in eternal life.

6:1 <sup>1</sup> ver 15; Ro 3:5, 8  
 6:2 <sup>2</sup> Col 3:3, 5; 1Pe 2:24  
     6:3 <sup>3</sup> Mt 28:19  
 6:4 <sup>4</sup> Col 2:12 <sup>5</sup> Ro 7:6;  
     Gal 6:15; Eph 4:22-24;  
     Col 3:10  
 6:5 <sup>6</sup> 2Co 4:10; Php 3:10,  
     11  
 6:6 <sup>7</sup> Eph 4:22; Col 3:9  
     Gal 2:20; Col 2:12, 20  
     <sup>8</sup> Ro 7:24  
 6:9 <sup>9</sup> Ac 2:24 <sup>10</sup> Rev 1:18  
     6:10 <sup>11</sup> ver 2  
     6:11 <sup>12</sup> ver 2  
 6:13 <sup>13</sup> ver 16, 19; Ro 7:5  
     Ro 12:1; 1Pe 2:24  
 6:14 <sup>14</sup> Gal 5:18 <sup>15</sup> Ro 3:24

## Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ

**6** What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?<sup>2</sup> By no means! We are those who have died to sin;<sup>3</sup> how can we live in it any longer?<sup>4</sup> Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized<sup>x</sup> into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?<sup>5</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead<sup>y</sup> through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.<sup>z</sup>

<sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.<sup>a</sup> <sup>6</sup>For we know that our old self<sup>b</sup> was crucified with him<sup>c</sup> so that the body ruled by sin<sup>d</sup> might be done away with,<sup>e</sup> that we should no longer be slaves to sin — <sup>7</sup>because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

<sup>8</sup>Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup>For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead,<sup>g</sup> he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. <sup>10</sup>The death he died, he died to sin<sup>h</sup> once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

<sup>11</sup>In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin<sup>i</sup> but alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup>Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup>Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness,<sup>j</sup> but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.<sup>j</sup> <sup>14</sup>For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law,<sup>k</sup> but under grace.<sup>l</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 6 Or be rendered powerless

**6:1–23 Freedom From Bondage to Sin.** Those who are justified by faith can have confidence that God will vindicate them in his future judgment (ch. 5). But they also can have confidence that God has provided, in Christ, for what they need to live faithful and fruitful lives for God in the present. For God not only liberates sinners from the penalty of sin (“justification”; cf. 3:21–4:25) but also frees them from the power of sin (ch. 6).

**6:1–14 Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ.** Believers, who are united to Christ, participate in his victory over sin and the new life his resurrection inaugurated.

**6:1 Shall we go on sinning ...?** The immediate occasion for Paul's rhetorical question is 5:20: “where sin increased, grace increased all the more.” But this same question naturally arises from Paul's broader teaching about the gospel: if people are justified by faith alone, are they free to live any way they want?

**6:2 By no means!** Paul rejects any such implication with his strongest negative (Greek *mē genoito*, a formula typical of the diatribe style Paul is using [see note on 2:1]). **died to sin.** Not removed entirely from sin's influence but set free from its absolute power (vv. 6, 14, 18, 22).

**6:4 baptism.** Could refer to “baptism” (i.e., “immersion”) in the Spirit (perhaps, e.g., 1 Cor 12:13) but probably refers to the widespread early Christian practice of water baptism. This may suggest that baptism has the symbolic value of picturing the believer's death to sin (entering the water) and rising again to new life (coming up from the water). Or baptism may function here as shorthand for the conversion experience since the NT closely associates water baptism with conversion (see Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21). In any case, Paul is clear that faith, not baptism, is what effects the transfer from the old life to the new. **glory of the Father.** God's glory is often closely associated with his power (Ps 145:11; Col 1:11; 1 Pet 4:11). **we too may live a new life.** As our identification with Christ's death in baptism sets us free from sin's power, so our identification with Christ in his resurrection (vv. 5, 8) enables us to live according to God's will and the Spirit's direction (see 7:6).

**6:6 our old self.** Or “our old man.” The masculine rendering has the virtue of bringing out more clearly the connection between this verse and Adam, who is called “the man” throughout 5:12–21. The “old man” is a way of describing humans in their natural state, represented by Adam, *the* “old man,” and therefore dominated by sin and death. See also Eph 4:22; Col 3:9. **was crucified with him.** As God deems all

people to be “in Adam” (prior to conversion), so he deems believers to be “in Christ.” In our relationship to him, we participate in his death, burial, and resurrection and all the benefits those central redemptive events secured. See also Gal 2:20. **body ruled by sin.** Humans in their preregenerate state, dominated by sin's power. **might be done away with.** Not destroyed but “rendered powerless” (see NIV text note); the old self no longer dictates how a believer lives.

**6:7 set free.** Or “justified.” But the unusual Pauline use of the preposition “from” after “justify” suggests he is referring to liberation rather than justification (but see Acts 13:38).

**6:8 we will also live with him.** The reference may be to the spiritual life we now enjoy in and with Christ (see v. 11; Eph 2:5–6; Col 2:13) or to the future physical resurrection (2 Cor 4:4; Phil 3:21; 1 Thess 4:17; 2 Tim 2:11). See also v. 5.

**6:10 he died to sin.** Although Christ was sinless and never succumbed to sin's power (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15), his full identification with human beings in the incarnation meant that sin's power affected him. He therefore had to “die” to it. This provides a crucial step in the logic of this section: Christ died to sin (v. 10), and believers died with Christ (v. 6); therefore, believers died to sin (v. 2).

**6:11–13** Our participation in Christ's death and resurrection puts us in a decisively new relationship to sin and to God. But we also need to live out this new relationship by thinking about ourselves in a new way (v. 11) and by acting in accordance with our new status (vv. 12–13).

**6:14 sin shall no longer be your master.** Succinctly summarizes what this section teaches in the form of a promise. **under the law.** Might mean “under the condemnation pronounced by the law” but more likely refers to the general state of being bound to the authority of the Mosaic law (see also v. 15; 1 Cor 9:20; Gal 3:23; 4:4–5, 21; 5:18). So the contrast (“not under the law, but under grace”) is probably salvation-historical—between the Mosaic law that was central to the old covenant and the grace that reigns with new power in the new covenant (see John 1:17). Paul is not, of course, saying that there is no “law” in the new covenant era (see 1 Cor 7:19; 9:20–22; Gal 6:2) nor is he saying that there was no grace in the old covenant. But as much as the law of Moses was a gracious gift to Israel, it did not provide the power to conquer sin's power. So the prophets looked to a time when God would act in a new way to transform the human heart (Ezek 36:25–27). It is Christ's new covenant work that provides this power.

## Slaves to Righteousness

<sup>15</sup>What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! <sup>16</sup>Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin,<sup>m</sup> which leads to death,<sup>n</sup> or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? <sup>17</sup>But thanks be to God<sup>o</sup> that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching<sup>p</sup> that has now claimed your allegiance. <sup>18</sup>You have been set free from sin<sup>q</sup> and have become slaves to righteousness.

<sup>19</sup>I am using an example from everyday life<sup>r</sup> because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness<sup>s</sup> leading to holiness. <sup>20</sup>When you were slaves to sin,<sup>t</sup> you were free from the control of righteousness. <sup>21</sup>What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!<sup>u</sup> <sup>22</sup>But now that you have been set free from sin<sup>v</sup> and have become slaves of God,<sup>w</sup> the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. <sup>23</sup>For the wages of sin is death,<sup>x</sup> but the gift of God is eternal life<sup>y</sup> in<sup>a</sup> Christ Jesus our Lord.



**Roman relief of a slave being freed.**  
In Romans 6:16–18 Paul likens sin to slavery and that believers have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Roman civilization, Relief portraying slave being freed/D  
Agostini Picture Library/A. Dagli Orti/Bridgeman Images

**6:16** <sup>m</sup>Jn 8:34; 2Pe 2:19  
<sup>n</sup>ver 23

**6:17** <sup>o</sup>Ro 1:8; 2Co 2:14  
<sup>p</sup>2Ti 1:13

**6:18** <sup>q</sup>ver 7, 22; Ro 8:2

**6:19** <sup>r</sup>Ro 3:5 <sup>s</sup>ver 13

**6:20** <sup>t</sup>ver 16

**6:21** <sup>u</sup>ver 23

**6:22** <sup>v</sup>ver 18 <sup>w</sup>1Co 7:22;  
1Pe 2:16

**6:23** <sup>x</sup>Ge 2:17; Ro 5:12;  
Gal 6:7, 8; Jas 1:15

<sup>y</sup>Mt 25:46

**7:1** <sup>z</sup>Ro 1:13

## Released From the Law, Bound to Christ

**7** Do you not know, brothers and sisters<sup>2</sup>—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? <sup>2</sup>For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the

<sup>a</sup> 23 Or *through*

**6:15–23 Slaves to Righteousness.** Paul uses another rhetorical question, similar to the one in v. 1, to reinforce his teaching from vv. 1–14. The focus shifts from the negative (free from sin) to the positive (slaves of God).

**6:16 obedience, which leads to righteousness.** In the first part of Romans, Paul uses “righteousness” to refer to “right standing” before God. But in 6:15–23, Paul contrasts “righteousness” with “sin” (vv. 18, 20) and “impurity” (v. 19), revealing that he is using the word in another of its biblical senses: behavior that conforms to God’s standard.

**6:17 slaves to sin.** As he does throughout Romans, Paul refers to “sin” (singular) as a power that exerts its influence over people. The many sins people commit are a symptom of the ruling authority of the sinful impulse within fallen human beings. **pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.** The Greek (using *typos*) suggests that the gospel stamps a new set of standards on the hearts of people who respond to the gospel. New covenant obedience stems from transformed hearts (see the promise of Jer 31:31–34; Heb 8:9–12).

**6:19 human limitations.** Greek *sarx* (“flesh”). Paul could mean that our sinful tendency makes it necessary for him to remind us of God’s holy standards. But it is more likely that he refers to our difficulty in understanding the things of God, requiring him to use analogies “from everyday life” (such as slavery) to make his point. **holiness.** Could also be translated “sanctification.” God himself sanctifies all those who believe in Jesus: they become “holy,” or “saints,” members of God’s own people (see, e.g., 1:7). But sanctification is also a process of becoming increasingly obedient to the will of God (1 Thess 4:3); and believers need to

engage in this lifelong pursuit of holiness if they expect to enjoy eternal life (v. 22; see Heb 12:14: “without holiness no one will see the Lord”).

**7:1–25 Freedom From Bondage to the Law.** Paul now develops the idea of not being “under the law” (6:14, 15), insisting that believers must be set free from the binding authority of the law of Moses in order to enjoy new life in Christ (vv. 1–6). The possibility that this teaching (and other teachings about the law in Romans) might be interpreted as disparaging the law leads Paul to assert emphatically that the law is “holy, righteous and good” (v. 12). Nevertheless, sin has used God’s good law to bring death (vv. 7–11), a startling development that Paul explains further in vv. 13–25.

**7:1–6 Released From the Law, Bound to Christ.** After reminding his readers of a common truth (v. 1) and illustrating it (vv. 2–3), Paul makes his central point (v. 4) and explains it (vv. 5–6).

**7:1 the law.** Probably, as throughout ch. 7, the law of Moses. Since God gave this law specifically to Jews, “those who know the law” may refer to Jewish Christians. But many, if not most, of the Gentile Christians in Rome were probably former “God-fearers”: Gentiles who had not converted to Judaism but who were interested in Judaism, attending the synagogue and coming to know the law of Moses in that setting.

**7:2 For example.** Paul illustrates the principle of v. 1 in vv. 2–3 with reference to the marriage relationship. This is not an allegory in which the various details stand for some spiritual entity. Since this is an illustration with one basic purpose, we must be careful about reading significance into the details. It would probably be wrong, for instance, to draw any conclusions from it about biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage.

7:2 <sup>a</sup> 1Co 7:39  
 7:4 <sup>b</sup> Ro 8:2; Gal 2:19  
       <sup>c</sup> Col 1:22  
 7:5 <sup>d</sup> Ro 7:7–11 <sup>e</sup> Ro 6:13  
 7:6 <sup>f</sup> Ro 2:29; 2Co 3:6  
 7:7 <sup>g</sup> Ro 3:20; 4:15  
       <sup>h</sup> Ex 20:17; Dt 5:21  
 7:8 <sup>i</sup> ver 11 <sup>j</sup> Ro 4:15;  
       1Co 15:56  
 7:10 <sup>k</sup> Lev 18:5;  
       Lk 10:26–28; Ro 10:5;  
       Gal 3:12  
 7:11 <sup>l</sup> Ge 3:13  
 7:12 <sup>m</sup> 1Ti 1:8

law that binds her to him.<sup>a</sup> <sup>3</sup>So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man.

<sup>4</sup>So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law<sup>b</sup> through the body of Christ,<sup>c</sup> that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

<sup>5</sup>For when we were in the realm of the flesh,<sup>d</sup> the sinful passions aroused by the law<sup>e</sup> were at work in us,<sup>e</sup> so that we bore fruit for death. <sup>6</sup>But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.<sup>f</sup>

### The Law and Sin

<sup>7</sup>What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law.<sup>g</sup> For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”<sup>h</sup> <sup>8</sup>But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment,<sup>i</sup> produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead.<sup>j</sup> <sup>9</sup>Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. <sup>10</sup>I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life<sup>k</sup> actually brought death. <sup>11</sup>For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me,<sup>l</sup> and through the commandment put me to death. <sup>12</sup>So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.<sup>m</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin

<sup>a</sup> 5 In contexts like this, the Greek word for *flesh* (*sarx*) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit. <sup>b</sup> 7 Exodus 20:17; Deut. 5:21

**7:4 you also died to the law.** As with the phrase “under the law” in 6:14,15, Paul might have in mind the condemning power of the law. But he may, more broadly, refer to the binding authority of the law of Moses. To be bound to that law means to be bound still to the old covenant, which was unable to set its adherents free from sin’s power. One must therefore be separated from that law and its covenant in order to “belong to another,” namely, Christ, in whose resurrection power we participate (6:4–5,8).

**7:5 realm of the flesh.** Greek *sarx*, a key motif in this part of Romans (see also vv. 18,25; 8:3 [three times],4,5 [twice],6,7,8,9,12 [twice],13). Paul uses the word *sarx* to refer to “natural” human existence apart from God (see note on 1:3). He pictures unbelievers as living in a realm dominated by this power. **sinful passions aroused by the law.** A startling claim that Paul explains in vv. 7–11.

**7:6 But now.** As Paul often does, he contrasts the old realm, dominated by the flesh, sin, and death, with the new realm believers now live in. **what once bound us.** The law of Moses (see v. 4). **Spirit ... written code.** Paul contrasts the new covenant gift of the Spirit and the law of Moses, pictured in terms of the Ten Commandments, carved on stone (2:29; 2 Cor 3:3,6–7).

**7:7–25 The Law and Sin.** Verses 7–12 are framed by the issue of the nature of the law: it is not “sinful” (v. 7a); rather, it is “holy, righteous and good” (v. 12). But while the law is not itself sinful, Paul reiterates that sin has used it to bring death (vv. 7b–11).

Verses 13–25 respond to a question that vv. 7–12 naturally raise: how could God’s good law become the occasion for sin and death? Paul’s answer focuses on human inability: God gives his good law to people who are already captive to the power of sin; therefore, they cannot obey the law that God has given them, and death results. The spiritual status of the person whom Paul describes in these verses is debated. Noting that Paul apparently refers to himself using the present tense (“I am,” “I do,” “I want,” etc.) and that the person “delight[s] in God’s law” (v. 22), many interpreters think Paul is describing his own experience as a Christian. Others, however, think that Paul is describing his past experience as a Jew under the law. They point to language that appears to contradict what Paul says in Romans about Christians: “sold as a slave to sin” (v. 14) versus “set free from sin” (6:18,22); “a prisoner of the law of sin” (v. 23) versus “free from the law of sin” (8:2). Whatever

specific situation Paul has in view, his basic teaching in this passage stands: humans are unable to obey God’s law and cannot therefore find salvation through it.

**7:7 Is the law sinful?** The question naturally arises from the claim of v. 5 (“sinful passions aroused by the law”) and the earlier series of negative comments on the law (v. 4; 3:20; 4:15; 5:20; 6:14–15). I ... I. From this point to the end of the chapter, Paul uses the first-person singular (“I,” “me”). He is undoubtedly reflecting on (1) his own experience, but in keeping with first-century Jewish ways of thinking, his own experience is bound up with (2) his solidarity as a human being with Adam and his sin and with (3) his own people Israel. These three foci mingle in this passage. In this verse Paul is thinking of his own life but also of the experience of Israel as a whole: it was through the law that the Israelites became “conscious of [their] sin” (3:20).

**7:8,11 the opportunity.** The Greek word has the sense of a bridgehead, a position seized in enemy territory that becomes a base of operations. The law’s series of specific “dos” and “don’ts” stimulated in Paul and other Jews the desire to rebel against God and his rules.

**7:8 sin was dead.** Sin exists in every human since Adam, but the law has enabled sin to become especially powerful.

**7:9 Once I was alive apart from the law.** Paul may be reflecting on (1) his own state of relative “innocence” in childhood or before he came truly to understand what the law was requiring of him; (2) his solidarity with Adam, who was, indeed, “alive” before he disobeyed God’s commandment about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17; 3:1–7); or (3) his solidarity with the Israelites, who experienced a kind of “death” (v. 10) when God’s law came and branded them clearly as sinners (3:20; 4:15; 5:13–14).

**7:10 the very commandment that was intended to bring life.** Probably a generalization, representing the Mosaic law, which promised life for those who faithfully followed its precepts (Lev 18:5; Deut 30:15–20).

**7:11 deceived me.** Possibly alludes to Eve’s response to God in Gen 3:13: “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

**7:13 Did that which is good ... become death to me?** As he so often does in Romans, Paul uses a question arising from his previous teaching to move his argument along. How could the “good” law (v. 12) be the occasion of death?

might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

<sup>14</sup>We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual,<sup>n</sup> sold<sup>o</sup> as a slave to sin. <sup>15</sup>I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.<sup>p</sup> <sup>16</sup>And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.<sup>q</sup> <sup>17</sup>As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.<sup>r</sup> <sup>18</sup>For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.<sup>as</sup> For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup>For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing.<sup>t</sup> <sup>20</sup>Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.<sup>u</sup>

<sup>21</sup>So I find this law at work.<sup>v</sup> Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. <sup>22</sup>For in my inner being<sup>w</sup> I delight in God's law;<sup>x</sup> <sup>23</sup>but I see another law at work in me, waging war<sup>y</sup> against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. <sup>24</sup>What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?<sup>z</sup> <sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature<sup>b</sup> a slave to the law of sin.

### Life Through the Spirit

**8** Therefore, there is now no condemnation<sup>a</sup> for those who are in Christ Jesus,<sup>b</sup> <sup>2</sup>because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life<sup>c</sup> has set you<sup>c</sup> free<sup>d</sup> from the law of sin<sup>e</sup> and death. <sup>3</sup>For what the law was powerless<sup>f</sup> to do because it was weakened by the flesh,<sup>d</sup> God did by sending his

<sup>a</sup> 18 Or *my flesh* <sup>b</sup> 25 Or *in the flesh* <sup>c</sup> 2 The Greek is singular; some manuscripts *me* <sup>d</sup> 3 In contexts like this, the Greek word for *flesh* (*sarx*) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit; also in verses 4–13.

**7:14 law.** The law of Moses. What Paul says in these verses about the law of Moses applies to any law, or commandment, or even the promptings of the conscience (see 2:14–15) — anything that brings us face to face with the will of God for us. **but.** Paul announces at the outset the basic tension of the passage: the law is “spiritual” (here), “good” (v. 16), something to “delight in” (v. 22) — it is “God’s law” (vv. 22, 25); but the human being is “unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin” (here), “wretched” (v. 24), “a slave to the law of sin” (v. 25; cf. v. 23) — a person in whom “good . . . does not dwell” (v. 18).

**7:15–20** Paul vividly portrays the frustration of the human condition. The very best people seek to obey God, but they find themselves unable to do so consistently. What this reveals, Paul concludes, is that people are subject to some kind of sinful power: “sin living in me” (vv. 17, 20), “my sinful nature” (v. 18). Paul is not suggesting that people are not responsible for their actions. Rather, he is reminding us that human beings are fatally bent away from God and toward sin by virtue of their involvement in Adam’s sin (5:12–21).

**7:21 this law.** Perhaps the law of Moses; but more likely Paul is using “law” in the sense of “principle.”

**7:22 my inner being.** Paul uses this same language elsewhere with reference to believers (2 Cor 4:16; Eph 3:16), but it was also used widely among Greek authors to depict the Godward, immortal side of the human being. Christians, of course, delight in God’s law, but so did faithful Jews.

**7:23 the law of my mind . . . the law of sin.** These phrases could refer to contrasting sides of the same law of Moses. This law is “God’s law” (v. 22) that the person approves of and seeks to do and that, at the same time, sin has used to bring death (vv. 7–11). It may be more likely, however, that the second phrase uses a play on words: fighting against the law of God is another “law,” or “power”: sin (see also 8:2).

**7:24 What a wretched man I am!** The cry from the heart of every person who sincerely seeks to obey God but finds themselves unable to meet his demands. **this body that is subject to death.** Either the physical body that is doomed to die (8:10) or the human person generally, which is under sentence of spiritual death because of sin (vv. 5, 9–11, 13).

**7:25 Thanks be to God . . . !** This cry of victory comes before a final restatement of the struggle, which might suggest that Paul speaks in this section as a Christian, conscious of his deliverance through Christ but also aware of his continuing struggle with sin. On the other hand, the thanksgiving could be an interjection of Paul the Christian into a passage that describes the defeat that he experienced as a Jew trying to live up to the demands of the law of Moses.

**8:1–39 Assurance of Eternal Life in the Spirit.** Paul begins by restating the basic point he has made in ch. 5: Christians, who belong to Christ Jesus, no longer fear the “condemnation” that those who are “in Adam” must inevitably experience (see 5:16, 18). The confidence in ultimate salvation crops up repeatedly in ch. 8 (vv. 6, 10–11, 17–18, 29–30, 31–39). The ministry of the Spirit, a key motif (ch. 8 mentions the Spirit 18 times), is an important source of this confidence. But the Spirit also gives the believer the power to please God in this life (vv. 4–9, 12–13, 26–27).

**8:1–17 Life Through the Spirit.** The Spirit brings life to people who are dead because of sin (7:5, 7–11, 24). Applying the benefits of Christ’s death on our behalf (v. 3), the Spirit gives us life now by liberating us from the power of sin and death (v. 2), and he is also instrumental in giving us life in the future, when our bodies are raised from the dead (v. 11). The Spirit conquers the flesh, setting believers on a new path that conforms to the will of God (vv. 4–9). Yet believers must not be inactive: they must put into effect the power of the Spirit if they expect to experience eternal life (vv. 12–13). And by the Spirit’s power, believers become children of God, with all the benefits the status of “adoption” (v. 15) brings them, both now and in the future (vv. 14–17).

**8:1 Therefore.** The joyful proclamation of “no condemnation” rests on our incorporation into Christ and the benefits of his death (5:12–21). This is the central point of all of chs. 5–8, which Paul here restates in light of the believer’s new relationship to sin (ch. 6) and the law (ch. 7; cf. 8:2).

**8:2 law of the Spirit.** Probably the “power” of the Spirit. **law of sin and death.** Either the Mosaic law, which sin has used to bring death (7:7–11) or, as in the first part of the verse, the “power” of sin that brings death (see 7:23).

**8:3 what the law was powerless to do.** Succinctly summarizes the

7:14 <sup>a</sup>1Co 3:1  
<sup>q</sup>Ki 21:20, 25; 2Ki 17:17  
7:15 <sup>p</sup>ver 19; Gal 5:17  
7:16 <sup>q</sup>ver 12  
7:17 <sup>r</sup>ver 20  
7:18 <sup>s</sup>ver 25  
7:19 <sup>t</sup>ver 15  
7:20 <sup>u</sup>ver 17  
7:21 <sup>v</sup>ver 23, 25  
7:22 <sup>w</sup>Eph 3:16 <sup>x</sup>Ps 1:2  
7:23 <sup>y</sup>Gal 5:17; Jas 4:1;  
1Pe 2:11  
7:24 <sup>z</sup>Ro 6:6; 8:2  
8:1 <sup>a</sup>ver 34 <sup>b</sup>ver 39;  
Ro 16:3  
8:2 <sup>c</sup>1Co 15:45 <sup>d</sup>Ro 6:18  
<sup>e</sup>Ro 7:4  
8:3 <sup>f</sup>Ac 13:39; Heb 7:18

8:3 <sup>a</sup>Php 2:7<sup>b</sup>Heb 2:14, 178:4 <sup>i</sup>Gal 5:168:5 <sup>j</sup>Gal 5:19–21<sup>k</sup>Gal 5:22–258:6 <sup>l</sup>Gal 6:88:7 <sup>m</sup>Jas 4:48:9 <sup>n</sup>1Co 6:19; Gal 4:6<sup>o</sup>Jn 14:17; 1Jn 4:138:10 <sup>p</sup>Gal 2:20;

Eph 3:17; Col 1:27

8:11 <sup>q</sup>Ac 2:24 <sup>r</sup>Jn 5:218:13 <sup>s</sup>Gal 6:88:14 <sup>t</sup>Gal 5:18 <sup>u</sup>Jn 1:12;

Rev 21:7

8:15 <sup>v</sup>2Ti 1:7; Heb 2:15<sup>w</sup>Mk 14:36; Gal 4:5, 68:16 <sup>x</sup>Eph 1:138:17 <sup>y</sup>Ac 20:32; Gal 4:7<sup>z</sup>1Pe 4:138:18 <sup>aa</sup>2Co 4:17;

1Pe 4:13

own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh<sup>9</sup> to be a sin offering.<sup>aa</sup> And so he condemned sin in the flesh,<sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires;<sup>1</sup> but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.<sup>k</sup> <sup>6</sup>The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life<sup>l</sup> and peace. <sup>7</sup>The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God;<sup>m</sup> it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup>Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you.<sup>n</sup> And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ,<sup>o</sup> they do not belong to Christ.

<sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you,<sup>p</sup> then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life<sup>b</sup> because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead<sup>q</sup> is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies<sup>r</sup> because of<sup>c</sup> his Spirit who lives in you.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation — but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. <sup>13</sup>For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.<sup>s</sup>

<sup>14</sup>For those who are led by the Spirit of God<sup>t</sup> are the children of God.<sup>u</sup> <sup>15</sup>The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again;<sup>v</sup> rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.<sup>d</sup> And by him we cry, “*Abba*,<sup>e</sup> Father.”<sup>ww</sup> <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit<sup>x</sup> that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup>Now if we are children, then we are heirs<sup>y</sup> — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.<sup>z</sup>

### Present Suffering and Future Glory

<sup>18</sup>I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.<sup>a</sup> <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup>For the

<sup>a</sup> 3 Or *flesh*, for *sin* <sup>b</sup> 10 Or *you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive* <sup>c</sup> 11 Some manuscripts *bodies through* <sup>d</sup> 15 The Greek word for *adoption to sonship* is a term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture; also in verse 23. <sup>e</sup> 15 Aramaic for *father*

argument of 7:7–25: the law, though God's good gift to his people, cannot liberate people from sin's enslaving power (“the flesh”). **likeness of sinful flesh.** Christ became truly human, taking on “flesh” (John 1:14). But “likeness” suggests that the flesh he took on was not exactly like our “sinful flesh”: he was not guilty of sin “in Adam” as we are. **sin offering.** The Greek here (lit. “concerning sin”; see NIV text note) could mean simply that Christ's death was related to sin. But the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT, uses this Greek phrase to refer to the “sin offering” in Ps 40:6–8 (see also Heb 10:6,8; 13:11). **so he condemned sin in the flesh.** Christ entered the realm of the flesh, where sin seems to hold sway, to conquer the power of sin. Sin is “condemned” so that believers are not (v. 1).

**8:4 the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us.** May refer to the Spirit's enabling believers to conform to the basic demand of God's law. Or Paul might mean that because Christ has fulfilled the law in our place, God considers all who are “in Christ” to have fulfilled the law.

**8:5–9** “The flesh” is Paul's way of describing bias toward sin that affects all human life (vv. 7,8; see the note on 7:5). But believers are “not in the realm of the flesh” (v. 9); this bias toward sin no longer controls them. Rather, “the Spirit of God lives in [them]” (v. 9) and creates in them a new way of thinking (vv. 5–6) and living (v. 4).

**8:9–11** Paul switches quickly from “the Spirit of God lives in you” (v. 9) to “the Spirit of Christ” (v. 9) to “Christ is in you” (v. 10) to “the Spirit ... is living in you” (v. 11). The NT does not explicitly teach the doctrine of the Trinity (that God is one God existing in three Persons), but passages such as this clearly imply it.

**8:12–13** These verses are often connected to the following paragraph

(vv. 14–17), but more likely they conclude vv. 1–11: the life that the Spirit creates for us is worked out as believers respond to the work of the Spirit by actively using his power to conquer sin.

**8:14** In the OT, God calls Israel (sometimes also called “Ephraim”) his “son” (Exod 4:22; Jer 31:9,20), and Israelites accordingly call God “father” (Jer 3:19). So by naming believers “the children of God,” Paul is identifying them as the people of God, destined for “life” (v. 10).

**8:15 adoption to sonship.** Greek *huiōthesia*; refers to the Greco-Roman practice of adoption, which guaranteed to adopted children all the rights and privileges of natural children (see also v. 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5). While already adopted into God's family, many of the benefits of that status will be given only when God's work of redemption is finished (see v. 23). **Abba.** An Aramaic word for “Father” often used in intimate family settings. Jesus addressed God with this word (Mark 14:36), and believers adopted into God's family enjoy the same kind of intimate relationship with God.

**8:16 testifies with our spirit.** God's Spirit enables believers to experience the truth of their new life in their inner beings.

**8:17 if indeed we share in his sufferings.** Only those who fully identify with Christ in this life, entering into the sufferings that always accompany a godly lifestyle, will be able to share also in the glory that Christ already enjoys.

**8:18–30 Present Suffering and Future Glory.** This passage is framed by promises of the glory to which believers are destined (vv. 18,30). Like the created world, believers long for their ultimate redemption (vv. 19–23), waiting for it in hope (vv. 24–25). Believers can persevere in this hope because they recognize that the Spirit is helping them to pray rightly (vv. 26–27) and because God is at work on their behalf (vv. 28–30).

creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it,<sup>b</sup> in hope<sup>21</sup> that<sup>a</sup> the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay<sup>c</sup> and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

<sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning<sup>d</sup> as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup>Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,<sup>e</sup> groan<sup>f</sup> inwardly as we wait eagerly<sup>g</sup> for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in this hope we were saved.<sup>h</sup> But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

<sup>26</sup>In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us<sup>i</sup> through wordless groans. <sup>27</sup>And he who searches our hearts<sup>j</sup> knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

<sup>28</sup>And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who<sup>b</sup> have been called<sup>k</sup> according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those God foreknew<sup>l</sup> he also predestined<sup>m</sup> to be conformed to the image of his Son,<sup>n</sup> that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. <sup>30</sup>And those he predestined,<sup>o</sup> he also called; those he called, he also justified;<sup>p</sup> those he justified, he also glorified.<sup>q</sup>

## More Than Conquerors

<sup>31</sup>What, then, shall we say in response to these things?<sup>r</sup> If God is for us, who can be against us?<sup>s</sup> <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son,<sup>t</sup> but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who will bring any charge<sup>u</sup> against those whom God has chosen? It is

*<sup>a</sup> 20,21 Or subjected it in hope. <sup>21</sup>For <sup>b</sup> 28 Or that all things work together for good to those who love God, who; or that in all things God works together with those who love him to bring about what is good — with those who*

**8:18 our present sufferings.** As in the related text in 5:3–4, Paul is frank about the reality of Christian suffering. As Paul and Barnabas warned the new believers in the province of Galatia, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

**8:19 creation.** The “subhuman” creation. Following OT examples (e.g., Ps 65:12–13; Isa 24:4; Jer 4:28; 12:4), Paul personifies the created world.

**8:20 the one who subjected it.** God, who cursed “the ground” in response to Adam’s original sin (Gen 3:17).

**8:21 the creation itself will be liberated.** While the created world will be thoroughly renovated (2 Pet 3:7–13), it will not be destroyed. The “new heaven and new earth” (Rev 21:1) will be a renewing of this world, not a replacement (cf. Col 1:20; Rev 21:5).

**8:22 groaning as in the pains of childbirth.** Combines suffering with hope and a joyful outcome (see also Matt 24:8; Mark 13:8; John 16:20–22).

**8:23 firstfruits of the Spirit.** In the OT, “firstfruits” describes the first and best part of a crop that is to be offered to God (e.g., Exod 23:19; Lev 2:12). Similarly, God gives the Spirit to believers as the down payment on the many other blessings that he promises to bestow on his heirs, his adopted children (v. 17; see 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14). **groan inwardly.** Not audible groans, but a way of connoting the frustrated longing for ultimate deliverance (see Exod 3:7). **adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.** Illustrates the typical NT tension between the “already” and the “not yet”: while already given the status of God’s adopted children (v. 15), believers do not yet possess all the benefits of that adoption, such as resurrected, renewed bodies.

**8:26 the Spirit himself intercedes.** The Spirit makes up for our helplessness in often not knowing what to pray for; unknown to us, he brings before God the prayer that perfectly matches God’s will for us. **wordless groans.** The Spirit, along with creation (v. 22) and believers (v. 23), “groans.” These groans may be “wordless” because they do not take the form of normal human language or, more likely, because they are unspoken.

**8:28 in all things God works for the good.** A second reason—in addition to the Spirit’s intercession (vv. 26–27)—that believers can “wait ...

patiently” (v. 25) for their ultimate redemption: they can be confident that God works in all the circumstances of their lives to accomplish his good purpose for them. This is one of the great promises of Scripture. “The good” is not necessarily what believers might think is good but is what God deems will be best to assist their growth into the image of Christ (v. 29) and bring them to final glory (v. 30). **called.** God’s “effectual” calling, whereby he powerfully draws sinners into relationship with him (see 1:6–7).

**8:29–30** This sequence (or “chain”) of God’s acts on behalf of believers explains the “purpose” (v. 28) that God has for his people. The believer’s confidence for the present time, as well as for future glory, is rooted in God’s sovereign determination to call them into relationship with him, preserve them in that relationship, and vindicate them on the last day.

**8:29 foreknew.** Perhaps “knew ahead of time” (see Acts 26:5; 2 Pet 3:17, where the same Greek word is used): God “foreknew” who would believe in him and so predestined them. But “know” probably has the biblical sense of “enter into relationship with” (see Gen 18:19; Jer 1:5; Amos 3:2, where the same Hebrew word is translated “chosen,” “new,” and “chosen,” respectively): God chose to initiate a relationship with people “before the creation of the world” (Eph 1:4; cf. Rom 11:2; Acts 2:23; 1 Pet 1:2,20) and on that basis “predestined” them.

**8:30 glorified.** The final link in the “chain” of God’s gracious acts on our behalf (see note on vv. 29–30) and the focus of Paul’s concern. Having done all these other things for us, we can be utterly confident that God will complete his work by bringing us to glory.

**8:31–39 More Than Conquerors.** A moving hymnic response to the confidence that believers can have for the judgment to come (5:1—8:30). God is “for us” (v. 31), tirelessly working on our behalf (vv. 31–34) and showering his love upon us (vv. 35–39).

**8:31 these things.** The many promises found in 5:1—8:30. **who can be against us?** Satan may continue to battle against us and people may oppose us, but nothing can ever successfully separate the believer from God.

**8:32** The logic here is similar to 5:9–10: since God has done the difficult thing (sending his Son to die for us), we can depend on him to give us all other things, especially what is necessary to bring us to final glory.

**8:20** <sup>b</sup> Ge 3:17–19

**8:21** <sup>c</sup> Ac 3:21; 2Pe 3:13; Rev 21:1

**8:22** <sup>d</sup> Jer 12:4

**8:23** <sup>e</sup> 2Co 5:5 <sup>f</sup> 2Co 5:2, 4 <sup>g</sup> Gal 5:5

**8:24** <sup>h</sup> 1Th 5:8

**8:26** <sup>i</sup> Eph 6:18

**8:27** <sup>j</sup> Rev 2:23

**8:28** <sup>k</sup> 1Co 1:9; 2Ti 1:9

**8:29** <sup>l</sup> Ro 11:2 <sup>m</sup> Eph 1:5, 11 <sup>n</sup> 1Co 15:49;

2Co 3:18; Php 3:21; 1Jn 3:2

**8:30** <sup>o</sup> Eph 1:5, 11 <sup>p</sup> 1Co 6:11 <sup>q</sup> Ro 9:23

**8:31** <sup>r</sup> Ro 4:1 <sup>s</sup> Ps 118:6

**8:32** <sup>t</sup> Jn 3:16; Ro 4:25; 5:8

**8:33** <sup>u</sup> Isa 50:8, 9

8:34 <sup>v</sup> Ro 5:6-8  
<sup>w</sup> Mk 16:19 <sup>x</sup> Heb 7:25;  
 9:24; 1 Jn 2:1

8:35 <sup>y</sup> 1 Co 4:11

8:36 <sup>z</sup> Ps 44:22;  
 2 Co 4:11

8:37 <sup>a</sup> 1 Co 15:57

<sup>b</sup> Gal 2:20; Rev 1:5; 3:9

8:38 <sup>c</sup> Eph 1:21;  
 1 Pe 3:22

8:39 <sup>d</sup> Ro 5:8

9:1 <sup>e</sup> 2 Co 11:10;  
 Gal 1:20; 1 Ti 2:7 <sup>f</sup> Ro 1:9

9:3 <sup>g</sup> Ex 32:32 <sup>h</sup> 1 Co 12:3;  
 16:22 <sup>i</sup> Ro 11:14

9:4 <sup>j</sup> Ex 4:22 <sup>k</sup> Ge 17:2;  
 Ac 3:25; Eph 2:12

<sup>l</sup> Ps 147:19 <sup>m</sup> Heb 9:1  
<sup>n</sup> Ac 13:32

9:5 <sup>o</sup> Mt 1:1-16 <sup>p</sup> Jn 1:1  
<sup>q</sup> Ro 1:25

9:6 <sup>r</sup> Ro 2:28, 29;  
 Gal 6:16

God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died<sup>v</sup>—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God<sup>w</sup> and is also interceding for us. <sup>x</sup><sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?<sup>y</sup> <sup>36</sup>As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;  
 we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”<sup>az</sup>

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors<sup>a</sup> through him who loved us. <sup>b</sup><sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,<sup>b</sup> neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,<sup>c</sup> <sup>39</sup>neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God<sup>d</sup> that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### Paul's Anguish Over Israel

**9** I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying,<sup>e</sup> my conscience confirms<sup>f</sup> it through the Holy Spirit—it <sup>2</sup>I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup>For I could wish that I myself<sup>g</sup> were cursed<sup>h</sup> and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race,<sup>i</sup> <sup>4</sup>the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship;<sup>j</sup> theirs the divine glory, the covenants,<sup>k</sup> the receiving of the law,<sup>l</sup> the temple worship<sup>m</sup> and the promises.<sup>n</sup> <sup>5</sup>Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah,<sup>o</sup> who is God over all,<sup>p</sup> forever praised!<sup>q</sup> Amen.

### God's Sovereign Choice

<sup>6</sup>It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.<sup>r</sup> <sup>7</sup>Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, “It is through <sup>a</sup> <sup>36</sup> Psalm 44:22 <sup>b</sup> <sup>38</sup> Or *nor heavenly rulers* <sup>c</sup> <sup>5</sup> Or *Messiah, who is over all. God be forever praised!* Or *Messiah. God who is over all be forever praised!*

**8:34 Who then is the one who condemns?** Paul alludes to a similar expression of confidence in God's deliverance in Isa 50:7–9.

**8:35 trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword.** Paul had experienced firsthand God's faithfulness in the midst of such trials (2 Cor 11:23–27).

**8:39 neither height nor depth.** Perhaps refers to spiritual powers, but more likely is simply a figurative way of referring to everything in the created world (see Eph 3:18).

**9:1—11:36 The Defense of the Gospel: The Problem of Israel.** Paul tackles one of the most pressing theological problems of his day: how to reconcile God's promises to Israel with Israel's failure to believe the good news about Jesus the Messiah (9:1–5). Paul writes to the Roman Christians at a time when Gentiles are increasingly dominating the church both in Rome and in the wider Mediterranean world (see Introduction: Recipients; Purpose, 3). This situation is seemingly difficult to reconcile with God's OT promises addressed (at least mainly) to Israel. Paul's response is clear: “It is not as though God's word had failed” (9:6). Paul defends this claim in a four-stage argument. (1) God's promise had never embraced all Jews but only those whom God had chosen—whether Jews or Gentiles (9:6b–29). (2) Israel's predicament is a result of their failure to believe in Christ (9:30—10:21). (3) God's continuing faithfulness to his promises to Israel is seen in the present time in the many Jews (like Paul) who have responded to the gospel (11:1–10). (4) That faithfulness will be seen in the future when God saves “all Israel” (11:26; see 11:11–32). The question discussed in these chapters is vital to the truth of the gospel that Paul presents in Romans, for the gospel retains its power only so long as it culminates God's one plan of salvation (see 1:2; 3:21).

**9:1–5 Paul's Anguish Over Israel.** The central issue in chs. 9–11 is the tension between Israel's predicament (vv. 1–3) and God's promises (vv. 4–5).

**9:3 my people.** The Jews. Paul's deep and sincere sorrow for the Jews stems from most of them failing to believe the good news about Jesus.

Like Moses (Exod 32:30–32), Paul goes so far as to offer his own life on behalf of his fellow Jews—an offer he knows cannot be accepted.

**9:4 people of Israel.** In chs. 1–8, Paul refers to “Jews” as a way of connoting national identity. His shift to “Israel” and “Israelites” in chs. 9–11 emphasizes their covenant standing with God (see also vv. 6, 27, 31; 10:1, 16, 19, 21; 11:2, 7, 11, 25, 26). **adoption to sonship.** This same status is given to believers in Christ (8:15, 23). While God's adoption of Christians secures their salvation, Israel's “sonship” means that the people received God's blessing and promises (Exod 4:22; Jer 3:19; 31:9–10; Hos 11:1). **covenants.** In addition to the foundational covenant that God entered into with Israel at Sinai (e.g., Deut 5:2–3), the OT mentions several other covenants: with Abraham (Gen 17), Phinehas (Num 25:12–13), and David (2 Sam 23:5), and the “new covenant” (Jer 31:31–34). See also “the covenants of the promise” in Eph 2:12 and the article “Covenant,” p. XXXX.

**9:5 Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised!** The punctuation (which is not part of the original manuscripts) is debated (see NIV text note). But referring to the Messiah's “human ancestry” leads us to expect a contrasting reference to his divine status. This would then be one of a handful of NT texts that explicitly call Jesus “God” (see also John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:1). **Messiah.** Greek *christos*; translates a Hebrew word that means “anointed one.” The OT uses this language to refer to kings and, by extension, the coming ruler who would deliver Israel from sin and oppression (see Ps 2:2; Isa 61:1; Dan 9:25–27 [perhaps]). English translations usually carry over the Greek word into English (“Christ”), but in places where it focuses attention on the OT and Jewish background, the NIV picks up the original Hebrew word (rendered “Messiah”).

**9:6–29 God's Sovereign Choice.** Verse 6a states the thesis of chs. 9–11: God will be faithful to his word (i.e., in this context, his OT promises to Israel). The first stage in Paul's argument for this thesis unfolds in vv. 6b–29. Paul shows from the OT that God never intended for his promise to Israel to apply to all ethnic Israelites but only to those people whom God chose from within Israel (vv. 6b–13) and even from outside

## THE TWO ISRAELS IN ROMANS 9:6

There are two options for understanding the relationship of the two "Israels" in 9:6:

### Physical Israel and the Church



### Physical Israel and the Remnant



"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,  
and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."<sup>ea</sup>

<sup>16</sup>It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy.<sup>b</sup> <sup>17</sup>For Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."<sup>c</sup> <sup>18</sup>Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>19</sup>One of you will say to me:<sup>e</sup> "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?"<sup>f</sup>

<sup>20</sup>But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who

<sup>a</sup> 7 Gen. 21:12    <sup>b</sup> 9 Gen. 18:10,14    <sup>c</sup> 12 Gen. 25:23    <sup>d</sup> 13 Mal. 1:2,3    <sup>e</sup> 15 Exodus 33:19

<sup>f</sup> 17 Exodus 9:16

Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."<sup>as</sup> <sup>8</sup>In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children,<sup>1</sup> but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.<sup>9</sup> For this was how the promise was stated: "At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son."<sup>bu</sup>

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

<sup>14</sup>What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!<sup>z</sup> <sup>15</sup>For he says to Moses,

<sup>9:7</sup> <sup>a</sup>Ge 21:12;  
Heb 11:18

<sup>9:8</sup> <sup>1</sup>Ro 8:14

<sup>9:9</sup> <sup>a</sup>Ge 18:10, 14

<sup>9:10</sup> <sup>v</sup>Ge 25:21

<sup>9:11</sup> <sup>w</sup>Ro 8:28

<sup>9:12</sup> <sup>c</sup>Ge 25:23

<sup>9:13</sup> <sup>v</sup>Mal 1:2, 3

<sup>9:14</sup> <sup>z</sup>2Ch 19:7

<sup>9:15</sup> <sup>a</sup>Ex 33:19

<sup>9:16</sup> <sup>b</sup>Eph 2:8

<sup>9:17</sup> <sup>c</sup>Ex 9:16

<sup>9:18</sup> <sup>d</sup>Ex 4:21

<sup>9:19</sup> <sup>e</sup>Ro 11:19

<sup>12</sup>Ch 20:6; Da 4:35

Israel (vv. 24–29). Paul interrupts this argument to defend God's election (vv. 14–23).

**9:6 are Israel.** Perhaps all the people of God, both Jew and Gentile (see Gal 6:16 and note), but probably the elect from within physical Israel (vv. 7–13). True, "spiritual" Israel, to whom God's promises apply, is not identical to physical Israel (see "The Two Israels in Romans 9:6," p. XXXX).

**9:7 Abraham's children.** Since the people of Israel were descended from Abraham, they were known as Abraham's "descendants" (2 Chr 20:7; Ps 105:6; Isa 41:8; Jer 33:26) or "children" (Acts 13:26). Paul quotes the OT to show how God selected only some of Abraham's physical descendants to belong to Abraham's true, spiritual descendants (see also Gal 3:7). **through Isaac.** As Gen 21:12 indicates, God chose Abraham's son Isaac, not his other son Ishmael (Gen 16; 17:18–21; see Gal 4:21–31), to continue the line of promise.

**9:10–12** The next patriarchal generation illustrates even more clearly that God chooses without regard to any human characteristics or virtues: Esau and Jacob were born to the same parents at the same time (they were twins), yet God chose one and not the other. Indeed, he even chose the younger (Jacob) of the two (Gen 25:23).

**9:13 Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.** The sense is "Jacob I chose, but Esau I rejected" (see Luke 14:26). The words are taken from Mal 1:2–3 and refer to the nations of Israel and Edom. It is possible that Paul applies the words in that sense here, referring to the way God has used

different nations in accomplishing his purposes. But the context makes it more likely that he applies the text to personal election.

**9:14 Is God unjust?** A natural question arising from v. 13.

**9:15** God is sovereign, bestowing his mercy on whom he chooses.

**9:17 I raised you up for this very purpose.** God made Pharaoh ruler of Egypt at the time of the exodus for his own purposes (Exod 9:16). Pharaoh's repeated refusal to let Israel go stimulated God to perform a series of signs and wonders, which caused God's "name" to become widely known (see note on Exod 9:16).

**9:18 hardens whom he wants to harden.** The exodus narrative describes Pharaoh as hardening his own heart (e.g., Exod 8:15,32; 9:34) as well as God acting to harden Pharaoh's heart (Exod 7:3; 9:12; 14:4,17; see Exod 4:21 and note). Paul refers to these latter texts to make a point about the sovereignty of God in both salvation (having mercy) and condemnation. Of course, Paul also insists that human beings justly earn their condemnation (1:21; see the emphasis on Israel's unbelief in 9:30–10:21).

**9:19 Then why does God still blame us?** Another question (cf. v. 14) in response to Paul's stress on God's sovereignty.

**9:20–21** The references are to Isa 29:16; 45:9 and to the widespread OT comparison between God and the potter (e.g., Job 10:9; 38:14; Isa 64:8; Jer 18:1–6). God has the right to treat his human creatures as he chooses. Paul does not intend to deny human responsibility; as his repeated emphasis on the importance of faith reveals, human decisions

9:20 <sup>a</sup>Isa 64:8  
<sup>b</sup>Isa 29:16

9:21 <sup>1</sup>2Ti 2:20

9:22 <sup>2</sup>Ro 2:4

9:23 <sup>3</sup>Ro 2:4 <sup>1</sup>Ro 8:30

9:24 <sup>m</sup>Ro 8:28 <sup>a</sup>Ro 3:29

9:25 <sup>a</sup>Hos 2:23;

<sup>1</sup>Pe 2:10

9:26 <sup>p</sup>Hos 1:10

9:27 <sup>q</sup>Ge 22:17;

<sup>1</sup>Hos 1:10 <sup>r</sup>Ro 11:5

9:28 <sup>s</sup>Isa 10:22,23

9:29 <sup>1</sup>Jas 5:4 <sup>u</sup>Isa 1:9;

<sup>1</sup>Dt 29:23; <sup>1</sup>Isa 13:19;

<sup>1</sup>Jer 50:40

9:30 <sup>v</sup>Ro 1:17; <sup>1</sup>10:6;

<sup>1</sup>Gal 2:16; <sup>1</sup>Php 3:9;

<sup>1</sup>Heb 11:7

9:31 <sup>w</sup>Isa 51:1; <sup>1</sup>Ro 10:2;

<sup>3</sup>Gal 5:4

9:32 <sup>v</sup>1Pe 2:8

formed it,<sup>q</sup> ‘Why did you make me like this?’”<sup>ah</sup> <sup>21</sup>Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?<sup>i</sup>

<sup>22</sup>What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience<sup>j</sup> the objects of his wrath — prepared for destruction? <sup>23</sup>What if he did this to make the riches of his glory<sup>k</sup> known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory<sup>l</sup> —

<sup>24</sup>even us, whom he also called,<sup>m</sup> not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?<sup>n</sup> <sup>25</sup>As he says in Hosea:

“I will call them ‘my people’ who are not my people;  
and I will call her ‘my loved one’ who is not my loved one,”<sup>bo</sup>

<sup>26</sup>and,

“In the very place where it was said to them,  
‘You are not my people,’  
there they will be called ‘children of the living God.’”<sup>cp</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

“Though the number of the Israelites be like the sand by the sea,<sup>q</sup>  
only the remnant will be saved.<sup>r</sup>

<sup>28</sup>For the Lord will carry out  
his sentence on earth with speed and finality.”<sup>ds</sup>

<sup>29</sup>It is just as Isaiah said previously:

“Unless the Lord Almighty<sup>t</sup>  
had left us descendants,  
we would have become like Sodom,  
we would have been like Gomorrah.”<sup>eu</sup>

### Israel's Unbelief

<sup>30</sup>What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith,<sup>v</sup> <sup>31</sup>but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness,<sup>w</sup> have not attained their goal.<sup>x</sup> <sup>32</sup>Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.<sup>y</sup> <sup>33</sup>As it is written:

<sup>a</sup> 20 Isaiah 29:16; 45:9

<sup>b</sup> 25 Hosea 2:23

<sup>c</sup> 26 Hosea 1:10

<sup>d</sup> 28 Isaiah 10:22,23 (see Septuagint)

<sup>e</sup> 29 Isaiah 1:9

are significant. But God's sovereignty over all things, including salvation and eternal condemnation, is a basic theme of the Bible. We must affirm both God's sovereignty and human responsibility without denying one or the other.

**9:22 objects of his wrath.** People who have earned God's wrath by their sin and so are destined for condemnation. **destruction.** Not annihilation but the ultimate “undoing” of humans in hell.

**9:23 objects of his mercy.** People whom God has chosen to benefit from his grace and enjoy his glory (cf. 5:2; 8:18,30).

**9:24–29** Including Gentiles in the people of God is a persistent theme in Romans (e.g., 1:16). Paul illustrates in chiasmic order (*a-b / b'-a*):

*a* God calls people from the Jews (v. 24b)

*b* God calls people from the Gentiles (v. 24c)

*b'* The OT confirms that God calls people from the Gentiles (vv. 25–26)

*a'* The OT confirms that God calls people from the Jews (vv. 27–29)

The “not my people” of Hosea (Hos 1:10; 2:23) are the northern tribes of Israel. Paul, reading this prophecy in light of the Abrahamic promises, understands this phrase to include Gentiles as well (vv. 25–26; see 4:16–17). On the other hand, Isaiah (Isa 1:9; 10:22–23) speaks words

of both warning and promise to Israel (vv. 27–29). Many Israelites had been unfaithful to God's covenant, leaving only a “remnant” to be saved (v. 27). But God commits himself to preserve this remnant in faithfulness to his promises to Israel (see 11:1–10).

**9:30 — 10:21 Israel's Unbelief.** The unexpected turn in salvation history — with many Gentiles and comparatively few Jews becoming saved — can be explained from the standpoint of God's election (9:6–29) or from the standpoint of human belief and unbelief (9:30 — 10:21). Gentiles have chosen to submit to God's righteousness in faith, while Israel, as a whole, has not.

**9:30 a righteousness that is by faith.** Right standing with God is available only through faith (3:21 — 4:25; see note on 3:21–31).

**9:31 law as the way of righteousness.** The people of Israel have, generally, not found right standing with God because they viewed the law of Moses, and the works it demands, as a way of attaining that right standing.

**9:32 stumbling stone.** Christ, the one whom God puts in everyone's path. People either build on him in faith or stumble over him to their ruin.

**9:33** Paul quotes Isa 8:14; 28:16, which 1 Pet 2:4–8 also brings together (cf. Ps 118:22 in Mark 12:10 and parallels; see notes on Mark 12:10; 1 Pet 2:4–10).

“See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble  
and a rock that makes them fall,  
and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.”<sup>az</sup>

**10** Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.<sup>2</sup> For I can testify about them that they are zealous<sup>a</sup> for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.<sup>b</sup> <sup>4</sup> Christ is the culmination of the law<sup>c</sup> so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.”<sup>be</sup> <sup>6</sup> But the righteousness that is by faith<sup>f</sup> says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’”<sup>cg</sup> (that is, to bring Christ down)<sup>7</sup> “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’”<sup>d</sup> (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).<sup>8</sup> But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,”<sup>eh</sup> that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: <sup>9</sup> If you declare<sup>i</sup> with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,<sup>j</sup> you will be saved.<sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.<sup>11</sup> As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”<sup>fk</sup> <sup>12</sup> For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile<sup>l</sup> — the same Lord is Lord of all<sup>m</sup> and richly blesses all who call on him,<sup>13</sup> for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord<sup>n</sup> will be saved.”<sup>go</sup>

<sup>14</sup> 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? <sup>15</sup> And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”<sup>bp</sup>

<sup>16</sup> But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?”<sup>ia</sup> <sup>17</sup> Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message,<sup>f</sup> and the message is heard through the word about Christ.<sup>s</sup> <sup>18</sup> But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did:

<sup>a</sup> 33 Isaiah 8:14; 28:16    <sup>b</sup> 5 Lev. 18:5    <sup>c</sup> 6 Deut. 30:12    <sup>d</sup> 7 Deut. 30:13    <sup>e</sup> 8 Deut. 30:14  
<sup>f</sup> 11 Isaiah 28:16 (see Septuagint)    <sup>g</sup> 13 Joel 2:32    <sup>b</sup> 15 Isaiah 52:7    <sup>i</sup> 16 Isaiah 53:1

<sup>9:33</sup> <sup>2</sup> Isa 28:16;  
Ro 10:11  
<sup>10:2</sup> <sup>a</sup> Ac 21:20  
<sup>10:3</sup> <sup>b</sup> Ro 1:17  
<sup>10:4</sup> <sup>c</sup> Gal 3:24; Ro 7:1-4  
<sup>9</sup> Ro 3:22  
<sup>10:5</sup> <sup>e</sup> Lev 18:5; Ne 9:29;  
Eze 20:11, 13, 21;  
Ro 7:10  
<sup>10:6</sup> <sup>f</sup> Ro 9:30 <sup>9</sup> Dt 30:12  
<sup>10:8</sup> <sup>b</sup> Dt 30:14  
<sup>10:9</sup> <sup>i</sup> Mt 10:32; Lk 12:8  
<sup>1</sup> Ac 2:24  
<sup>10:11</sup> <sup>h</sup> Isa 28:16;  
Ro 9:33  
<sup>10:12</sup> <sup>1</sup> Ro 3:22, 29  
<sup>m</sup> Ac 10:36  
<sup>10:13</sup> <sup>9</sup> Isa 2:21  
<sup>9</sup> Joel 2:32  
<sup>10:15</sup> <sup>15</sup> Isa 52:7; Na 1:15  
<sup>10:16</sup> <sup>9</sup> Isa 53:1;  
Jn 12:38  
<sup>10:17</sup> <sup>1</sup> Gal 3:2, 5  
<sup>9</sup> Col 1:6

**10:2 their zeal is not based on knowledge.** Paul’s fellow Jews display a commendable dedication to God, but it is not directed by true insight into the purposes of God. The Gospels repeatedly touch on this issue, as Jews fail to understand that God is revealing himself in Jesus (Matt 13:22–37; John 9:13–41).

**10:3 sought to establish their own.** Like Paul in his pre-Christian days (Phil 3:6), many Jews viewed their commitment to the law as a basis for their right standing before God. They failed to understand that God has made available his own way of putting them right before him in Christ (see 9:31–32; 10:5).

**10:4 culmination.** Greek *telos*; combines the ideas of “end” and “goal.” Like the finish line in a race, Christ was what the law all along was directed toward; and now that Israel has reached the finish line (the coming of Christ), the race (the law) has ended. The law no longer governs the people of God in the way that it did before Christ (6:14–15; 7:4–6; Gal 3:23–25). **everyone who believes.** Gentiles as well as Jews (see vv. 11–13).

**10:5 The person who does these things will live by them.** The promise of Lev 18:5 (see note there) summarized a key element of the Mosaic law (see also Ezek 20:11, 13, 21): the “life” of God’s covenant promise would be achieved through obeying the law’s commandments. Of course, the Pentateuch as a whole makes clear that faith was always the basis for a relationship with God (Gen 15:6).

**10:6–8** Paul quotes language from Deut 30:12–14 to characterize “the righteousness that is by faith” (v. 6), which contrasts with “the righteousness that is by the law” (v. 5). The grace that characterized God’s gift of his law in the old economy is now decisively displayed in Christ. Just as Moses made God’s requirements accessible to the people of Israel, so Christ, who has come down from heaven and been raised from the dead, is accessible to all people by faith.

**10:9 mouth ... heart.** Paul takes up the words he quotes in v. 8 (taken from Deut 30:14). Paul’s desire to reflect these terms means that we should be careful not to invest public confession of Christ with more significance than the rest of Scripture warrants. **Jesus is Lord.** A basic affirmation of Christian faith (1 Cor 12:3).

**10:11** Paul returns to the language of Isa 28:16 (see 9:32–33).

**10:12 there is no difference between Jew and Gentile.** Jesus is Lord of both Jew and Gentile, and both have equal access to this Lord by the same means: faith (see v. 4).

**10:13 name of the Lord.** “The Lord” in Joel 2:32 (from which Paul quotes) is Yahweh, the name that the OT uses over 6,000 times to depict the God of Israel. For Paul, however, this Lord is clearly Jesus (see v. 9). By applying to Christ an OT text that refers to Yahweh, Paul associates Christ with God himself.

**10:14 they ... they ... they ... they ... they ... them.** Perhaps Israelites in particular (see v. 2), but more likely all people, as in vv. 12–13. Paul lays out the steps necessary for people to “call on the name of the Lord” (v. 13), but in reverse order: preachers are sent, the preachers proclaim the message, people hear the message, and those who hear believe. Paul suggests in vv. 16–21 that God has completed the first three of these steps for Israel: the problem, then, is their failure to believe.

**10:15 How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!** Paul quotes Isa 52:7, which refers to those who announce the good news that the exiled people of Israel will be able to return to their own land. Paul applies the verse to Christian preachers, who proclaim the ultimate “good news” about God’s intervention on behalf of all people in Christ (1:16).

**10:18** Paul is not claiming that Ps 19:4 (which he quotes here) refers directly to the preaching of the gospel. Rather, he uses the language of

10:18 <sup>1</sup>Ps 19:4;  
Mt 24:14; Col 1:6, 23;  
1Th 1:8

10:19 <sup>u</sup>Ro 11:11, 14  
<sup>v</sup>Dt 32:21

10:20 <sup>w</sup>Isa 65:1; Ro 9:30

10:21 <sup>x</sup>Isa 65:2  
11:1 <sup>y</sup>1Sa 12:22;  
Jer 31:37 <sup>z</sup>2Co 11:22  
<sup>a</sup>Php 3:5

11:2 <sup>b</sup>Ro 8:29

11:3 <sup>c</sup>1Ki 19:10, 14

11:4 <sup>d</sup>1Ki 19:18

11:5 <sup>e</sup>Ro 9:27

11:6 <sup>f</sup>Ro 4:4

11:7 <sup>g</sup>Ro 9:31 <sup>h</sup>ver 25;  
Ro 9:18

11:8 <sup>i</sup>Mt 13:13-15  
<sup>j</sup>Dt 29:4; Isa 29:10

11:10 <sup>k</sup>Ps 69:22, 23

“Their voice has gone out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.”<sup>at</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says,

“I will make you envious<sup>u</sup> by those who are not a nation;  
I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.”<sup>bv</sup>

<sup>20</sup>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.”<sup>cw</sup>

<sup>21</sup>But concerning Israel he says,

“All day long I have held out my hands  
to a disobedient and obstinate people.”<sup>dx</sup>

### The Remnant of Israel

**11** I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means!<sup>y</sup> I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham,<sup>z</sup> from the tribe of Benjamin.<sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup>God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.<sup>b</sup> Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah — how he appealed to God against Israel: <sup>3</sup>“Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me.”<sup>e?c</sup> <sup>4</sup>And what was God's answer to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”<sup>f/d</sup> <sup>5</sup>So too, at the present time there is a remnant<sup>e</sup> chosen by grace. <sup>6</sup>And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works;<sup>f</sup> if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

<sup>7</sup>What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain.<sup>g</sup> The elect among them did, but the others were hardened,<sup>h</sup> <sup>8</sup>as it is written:

“God gave them a spirit of stupor,  
eyes that could not see  
and ears that could not hear,<sup>i</sup>  
to this very day.”<sup>gi</sup>

<sup>9</sup>And David says:

“May their table become a snare and a trap,  
a stumbling block and a retribution for them.

<sup>10</sup>May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,  
and their backs be bent forever.”<sup>bk</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 18 Psalm 19:4

<sup>f</sup> 4 1 Kings 19:18

<sup>b</sup> 19 Deut. 32:21

<sup>g</sup> 8 Deut. 29:4; Isaiah 29:10

<sup>c</sup> 20 Isaiah 65:1

<sup>d</sup> 21 Isaiah 65:2

<sup>e</sup> 3 1 Kings 19:10, 14

<sup>b</sup> 10 Psalm 69:22, 23

the psalm (which is about God's revelation in nature) to describe the widespread availability of the gospel (see also Col 1:23).

**10:19 Did Israel not understand?** By quoting from Deut 32:21 in v. 19 and Isa 65:1–2 in v. 20, Paul justifies his implicit claim that Israel has, indeed, understood. In Deut 32:21, God made Israel “envious” to punish them for idolatry.

**10:20 those who did not seek me.** Gentiles. Both Moses and Isaiah, then, contrast faithless Israel (see v. 21) with Gentiles whom God is using positively in his purposes. This contrast harks back to the beginning of this section (9:30–31). Nevertheless, the section ends on a note of hope (v. 21), a note that ch. 11 repeatedly sounds: God still holds out his hands to his people Israel.

**11:1–10 The Remnant of Israel.** The focus on a “remnant” (v. 5) in this section shows that Paul returns to a theme he first broached in 9:27. The existence of a remnant of true believers reveals God's continuing faithfulness to his promise to Israel (vv. 1–2).

**11:1** Paul traces his ancestry to Benjamin, one of the 12 patriarchs (Gen 35:22–26; see also Phil 3:5)—a mark of true Jewishness.

**11:2 foreknew.** Chose beforehand (see note on 8:29).

**11:5 a remnant.** The key point in this section. As in the time of Elijah, there is hope in the midst of widespread apostasy: God is preserving for himself faithful Jews who, like Paul, have responded in faith to the good news.

**11:6 if by grace, then it cannot be based on works.** Echoes earlier teaching (4:4–5). Entrance into the remnant comes as a gift from God, not from human works of any kind.

**11:7 What the people of Israel sought so earnestly.** Right standing with God (9:30). **hardened.** Though the Greek verb is a different one, the idea here is the same as in 9:18 (see note). As the OT quotations of Deut 29:4; Isa 29:10; Ps 69:22–23 show (respectively in vv. 8–10), this hardening, while not unrelated to human unbelief, is an act of God (see also Isa 6:8–10; Mark 4:12).

**Ingrafted Branches**

<sup>11</sup>Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all!<sup>11</sup> Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles<sup>m</sup> to make Israel envious.<sup>n</sup> <sup>12</sup>But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles,<sup>o</sup> how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

<sup>13</sup>I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles,<sup>p</sup> I take pride in my ministry <sup>14</sup>in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy<sup>q</sup> and save<sup>r</sup> some of them. <sup>15</sup>For if their rejection brought reconciliation<sup>s</sup> to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?<sup>t</sup> <sup>16</sup>If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits<sup>u</sup> is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

<sup>17</sup>If some of the branches have been broken off,<sup>v</sup> and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others<sup>w</sup> and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, <sup>18</sup>do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.<sup>x</sup> <sup>19</sup>You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” <sup>20</sup>Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith.<sup>y</sup> Do not be arrogant,<sup>z</sup> but tremble.<sup>a</sup> <sup>21</sup>For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

**11:11** <sup>1</sup>ver 1 <sup>m</sup>Ac 13:46  
<sup>n</sup>Ro 10:19  
**11:12** <sup>o</sup>ver 25  
**11:13** <sup>p</sup>Ac 9:15  
**11:14** <sup>q</sup>ver 11; Ro 10:19  
<sup>r</sup>1Co 1:21; 1Ti 2:4;  
Titus 3:5  
**11:15** <sup>s</sup>Ro 5:10  
<sup>t</sup>Lk 15:24,32  
**11:16** <sup>u</sup>Lev 23:10,17;  
Nu 15:18-21  
**11:17** <sup>v</sup>Jer 11:16;  
Jn 15:2 <sup>w</sup>Ac 2:39;  
Eph 2:11-13  
**11:18** <sup>x</sup>Jn 4:22  
**11:20** <sup>y</sup>1Co 10:12;  
2Co 1:24 <sup>z</sup>Ro 12:16;  
1Ti 6:17 <sup>a</sup>Pe 1:17

**11:11 – 24 Ingrafted Branches.** God’s “hardening” of many Jews (see v. 7) does not mean that he has given up on Israel. His plan still includes Jews.

**11:11 their transgression.** Most Jews refused to believe in Christ. **to make Israel envious.** God designed the salvation that Gentiles enjoy to stimulate Jews to repent (see 10:19).

**11:12 riches for the world.** The spiritual benefits bestowed on Gentiles who believe. **greater riches.** The extensive blessings that arrive at the culmination of the ages. **full inclusion.** Or “fullness,” or “completeness”; probably the fulfillment of God’s purposes for Israel when he saves many of them (see also v. 25).

**11:13 the apostle to the Gentiles.** See 1:5; 15:16,18; Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17–18; Gal 1:16; 2:7,9; Eph 3:1,6,8; 1 Thess 2:15–16; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 4:17. Paul does not want the Gentile Christians in Rome to think that his focus on Gentiles implies that he has abandoned all hope for Israel.

**11:15 their rejection.** Either the Jews’ rejecting God or, more likely (vv. 7–10), God’s rejecting (many) Jews. **their acceptance.** God’s accepting Jews into his kingdom (see 14:3; 15:7), in contrast to “their rejection.”

**life from the dead.** Either renewal to spiritual life (cf. 6:13; Paul may see the “full inclusion” of Jews [v. 12] as taking place over the course of the church age as Jews come to Christ) or the resurrection from the

dead in the last day (God’s “acceptance” of many Jews may be associated with the end times when the dead are physically raised).

**11:16 dough offered as firstfruits.** See Num 15:17–21. Offering the “first portion” of the harvested grain to the Lord consecrated the whole batch. **root.** The patriarchs (see 1 Enoch 93:5; Philo, *Heir*, 279; *Jubilees* 21:24). **branches.** Jewish people. While all Jews are set apart as God’s people in a general sense (3:1; 9:4–5; 11:1–2,28), only God’s election, activated by faith, enables Jews (as well as Gentiles) to be saved.

**11:17 some of the branches have been broken off.** Some Jews have been cut off from true Israel because of God’s hardening and their unbelief (see “their transgression” in vv. 11,12 and “their rejection” in v. 15). **wild olive shoot.** A Gentile, who does not naturally belong to the olive tree.

**11:18 do not consider yourself to be superior.** Throughout vv. 11–32 Paul has Gentile Christians especially in view (see v. 13). Because so many Gentiles have come to Christ and make up so large a part of the church, they are beginning to look down on their Jewish brothers and sisters.

**11:20 tremble.** Or “fear.” Believers must never presume the security God promises them in Christ. They remain within the people of God only as long as they persist in faith.

**THE PATTERN OF GOD’S SAVING PLAN FOR ALL PEOPLE: JEWS AND GENTILES IN ROMANS 11**

v. 11: because of their transgression → salvation has come to the Gentiles → to make Israel envious
v. 12: their transgression → riches for the world their loss → riches for the Gentiles their full inclusion → greater riches
v. 15: their rejection → reconciliation to the world their acceptance → life from the dead
vv. 17–23: some of the branches have been broken off → you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in → God is able to graft them in again
vv. 25–26: Israel has experienced a hardening in part → until the full number of the Gentiles has come in → and in this way all Israel will be saved
vv. 30–31: as a result of their disobedience → you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy; as a result of God’s mercy to you → they too may now receive mercy

11:22 <sup>b</sup>Ro 2:4  
<sup>c</sup>1Co 15:2; Heb 3:6  
<sup>d</sup>Jn 15:2

11:23 <sup>e</sup>2Co 3:16

11:25 <sup>f</sup>Ro 1:13

<sup>g</sup>Ro 16:25 <sup>h</sup>Ro 12:16  
<sup>i</sup>ver 7; Ro 9:18 <sup>j</sup>Lk 21:24

11:27 <sup>k</sup>Isa 27:9  
 Heb 8:10, 12

11:28 <sup>l</sup>Ro 5:10 <sup>m</sup>Dt 7:8;  
 10:15; Ro 9:5

11:29 <sup>n</sup>Ro 8:28  
<sup>o</sup>Heb 7:21

11:30 <sup>p</sup>Eph 2:2

11:32 <sup>q</sup>Ro 3:9

11:33 <sup>r</sup>Ro 2:4 <sup>s</sup>Ps 92:5  
<sup>t</sup>Job 11:7

11:34 <sup>u</sup>Isa 40:13, 14;  
 Job 15:8; 36:22;  
 1Co 2:16

11:35 <sup>v</sup>Job 35:7

<sup>22</sup>Consider therefore the kindness<sup>b</sup> and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue<sup>c</sup> in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.<sup>d</sup> <sup>23</sup>And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.<sup>e</sup> <sup>24</sup>After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

### All Israel Will Be Saved

<sup>25</sup>I do not want you to be ignorant<sup>f</sup> of this mystery,<sup>g</sup> brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited:<sup>h</sup> Israel has experienced a hardening<sup>i</sup> in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in,<sup>j</sup> <sup>26</sup>and in this way<sup>k</sup> all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

“The deliverer will come from Zion;  
 he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

<sup>27</sup>And this is<sup>l</sup> my covenant with them  
 when I take away their sins.”<sup>ck</sup>

<sup>28</sup>As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies<sup>l</sup> for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs,<sup>m</sup> <sup>29</sup>for God’s gifts and his call<sup>n</sup> are irrevocable.<sup>o</sup> <sup>30</sup>Just as you who were at one time disobedient<sup>p</sup> to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience,<sup>31</sup> so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now<sup>d</sup> receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you. <sup>32</sup>For God has bound everyone over to disobedience<sup>q</sup> so that he may have mercy on them all.

### Doxology

<sup>33</sup>Oh, the depth of the riches<sup>r</sup> of the wisdom and<sup>e</sup> knowledge of God!<sup>s</sup>

How unsearchable his judgments,  
 and his paths beyond tracing out!<sup>t</sup>

<sup>34</sup>“Who has known the mind of the Lord?  
 Or who has been his counselor?”<sup>fu</sup>

<sup>35</sup>“Who has ever given to God,  
 that God should repay them?”<sup>gv</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 26 Or and so <sup>b</sup> 27 Or will be <sup>c</sup> 27 Isaiah 59:20,21; 27:9 (see Septuagint); Jer. 31:33,34

<sup>d</sup> 31 Some manuscripts do not have now.

<sup>e</sup> 33 Or riches and the wisdom and the <sup>f</sup> 34 Isaiah 40:13

<sup>g</sup> 35 Job 41:11

**11:22 provided that you continue.** Only believers who persevere in faith will be saved from God’s wrath on the day of judgment. Some theologians think that verses like this reveal that genuine believers can fail to persevere and so not be saved in the end. Others, however, insist that God himself, by his Spirit, maintains believers in the faith.

**11:24 contrary to nature.** Perhaps alludes to God’s grace, which transforms sinful people into God’s holy people. But more likely it simply notes that grafting a wild olive branch into a cultivated olive tree is an unusual procedure. See “The Pattern of God’s Saving Plan for All People: Jews and Gentiles in Romans 11,” p. XXXX.

**11:25–32 All Israel Will Be Saved.** God is faithful to his promises to Israel (vv. 1–2) not only by preserving a remnant of Jewish believers now but also by acting to save “all Israel” (v. 26) in the future.

**11:25 mystery.** A word Paul uses for an element in God’s plan that the OT does not clearly reveal (see 16:25; 1 Cor 2:1,7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 5:32; 6:19; Col 1:26,27; 2:2; 4:3; 2 Thess 2:7; 1 Tim 3:9,16). This mystery is the process by which God is using Israel’s “hardening” and the salvation of Gentiles to save all Israel (vv. 25b–26a). **until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.** Probably when all elect Gentiles come into God’s kingdom.

**11:26 all Israel will be saved.** “All Israel” need not mean every single Israelite. The OT uses this expression for a significant or representative

number of Israelites (e.g., Josh 7:25; 2 Sam 16:22; Dan 9:11; cf. also *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 10:1). There are three main ways to explain this promise about one of the important results of God’s providential work in history: (1) God saves all his elect people, both Jews and Gentiles, as they respond in faith to God’s grace throughout history. “Israel” would then refer to the church (see Gal 6:16 and note for this possibility). (2) God saves all elect Jews as they respond in faith to God’s grace throughout history. (3) God will save a significant number of Jews at the end of history. Whichever of these Paul has in mind, the salvation will be—as it always is since the coming of Christ into the world—through faith in Christ (10:9–13). **The deliverer will come from Zion.** Either Jesus’ first or second coming.

**11:28 they are enemies for your sake.** God is using the Jewish people’s estrangement from him to bring salvation to Gentiles (v. 11). **they are loved.** The striking juxtaposition of “enemies” and “loved” sums up the heart of Paul’s teaching about the Jewish people in this chapter. **11:32 all.** Not every single person, but every kind of person—Jew and Gentile alike.

**11:33–36 Doxology.** Paul fittingly concludes his sweeping description of God’s plan of salvation with a doxology that expresses wonder and awe at what God is doing.

**11:33–35** No one can fully comprehend God, who has no counselors or creditors.

<sup>36</sup>For from him and through him and for him are all things.<sup>w</sup>  
To him be the glory forever! Amen.<sup>x</sup>

## A Living Sacrifice

**12** Therefore, I urge you,<sup>y</sup> brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,<sup>z</sup> holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.<sup>2</sup> Do not conform<sup>a</sup> to the pattern of this world,<sup>b</sup> but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.<sup>c</sup> Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is<sup>d</sup>—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

## Humble Service in the Body of Christ

<sup>3</sup>For by the grace given me<sup>e</sup> I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.<sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,<sup>f</sup> <sup>5</sup>so in Christ we, though many, form one body,<sup>g</sup> and each member belongs to all the others.<sup>6</sup> We have different gifts,<sup>h</sup> according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your<sup>a</sup> faith;<sup>i</sup> <sup>7</sup>if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach;<sup>j</sup> <sup>8</sup>if it is to encourage, then give encouragement;<sup>k</sup> if it is giving, then give generously;<sup>l</sup> if it is to lead,<sup>b</sup> do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

## Love in Action

<sup>9</sup>Love must be sincere.<sup>m</sup> Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.<sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love.<sup>n</sup> Honor one another above yourselves.<sup>o</sup> <sup>11</sup>Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor,<sup>p</sup> serving the Lord.<sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope,<sup>q</sup> patient in affliction,<sup>r</sup> faithful in prayer.<sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.<sup>s</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you;<sup>t</sup> bless and do not curse.<sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.<sup>u</sup> <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another.<sup>v</sup> Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.<sup>c</sup> Do not be conceited.<sup>w</sup>

<sup>a</sup> 6 Or *the*      <sup>b</sup> 8 Or *to provide for others*      <sup>c</sup> 16 Or *willing to do menial work*

**11:36** <sup>w</sup>1Co 8:6;  
Col 1:16; Heb 2:10  
<sup>x</sup>Ro 16:27  
**12:1** <sup>y</sup>Eph 4:1 <sup>2</sup>Ro 6:13,  
16, 19; 1Pe 2:5  
**12:2** <sup>a</sup>1Pe 1:14  
<sup>b</sup>1Jn 2:15 <sup>c</sup>Eph 4:23  
<sup>d</sup>Eph 5:17  
**12:3** <sup>e</sup>Ro 15:15; Gal 2:9;  
Eph 4:7  
**12:4** <sup>f</sup>1Co 12:12–14;  
Eph 4:16  
**12:5** <sup>g</sup>1Co 10:17  
**12:6** <sup>h</sup>1Co 7:7; 12:4,  
8–10 <sup>i</sup>1Pe 4:10, 11  
**12:7** <sup>j</sup>Eph 4:11  
**12:8** <sup>k</sup>Ac 15:32  
<sup>l</sup>2Co 9:5–13  
**12:9** <sup>m</sup>1Ti 1:5  
**12:10** <sup>n</sup>Heb 13:1  
<sup>o</sup>Php 2:3  
**12:11** <sup>p</sup>Ac 18:25  
**12:12** <sup>q</sup>Ro 5:2  
<sup>r</sup>Heb 10:32, 36  
**12:13** <sup>s</sup>1Ti 3:2  
**12:14** <sup>t</sup>Mt 5:44  
**12:15** <sup>u</sup>Job 30:25  
**12:16** <sup>v</sup>Ro 15:5  
<sup>w</sup>Jer 45:5; Ro 11:25

**11:36 from ... through ... for.** God is the source, means, and goal of all things.

**12:1 — 15:13** *The Transforming Power of the Gospel: Christian Conduct.* The last major section of the body of Romans sets forth general principles and some specific applications of the gospel. The gospel provides not only salvation from God's wrath but also the power to live changed lives. Christ cannot be our Savior without also being our Lord.

**12:1–2** *A Living Sacrifice.* This is a basic but comprehensive call to respond to God's multifaceted "mercy" (v. 1; the word is plural in the Greek). This call to transformed living is the heading for all that follows. **12:1** **bodies.** Not just the physical body but the whole person, with a view to our engaging the world around us. **living.** God's grace in Christ has made Christians spiritually alive (6:13). **true and proper worship.** The worship appropriate for thinking creatures who recognize all that God has done for them. This worship is not confined to the Sunday morning worship service; it embraces the whole of life.

**12:2** **pattern of this world.** This present evil "age" (Greek *aiōn*; see Luke 16:8; 1 Cor 2:6,8; 3:18; Gal 1:4; Eph 2:2; 1 Tim 6:17; 2 Tim 4:10) has its own pattern of thinking and living that redeemed believers must avoid. **renewing of your mind.** The work of God's Spirit within must reprogram the "depraved mind" (1:28) that characterizes this world (see Eph 4:23).

**12:3–8** *Humble Service in the Body of Christ.* Those who are being transformed through the renewing of their minds will refrain from thinking too highly of themselves, recognizing the gifts of others.

**12:3** **the faith God has distributed to each of you.** Either the varying degrees of faith God has given to each believer or the Christian faith that all believers hold in common.

**12:4–6** **one body ... different gifts.** See 1 Cor 12.

**12:6** **gifts ... grace.** The Greek words are similar, suggesting that the gifts believers use to edify the community are the product of God's grace. **prophesying.** See note on 1 Cor 12:8–10.

**12:7** **serving.** Any form of service to Christ and his people. **teaching.** See note on 1 Cor 12:28.

**12:8** **lead.** The Greek word could also mean "give aid to."

**12:9–21** *Love in Action.* In a rapid-fire series of commands, Paul urges believers to demonstrate "sincere" love (v. 9) to both fellow believers (vv. 10, 13, 15–16) and unbelievers (vv. 14, 17–21).

**12:9** **Love.** Not a directionless emotion, but a moral orientation toward kingdom values.

**12:10** **Honor one another above yourselves.** The Lord Jesus himself models this attitude (see Phil 2:3–7).

**12:11** **but keep your spiritual fervor.** An alternate translation is "be set on fire by the Spirit."

**12:12** **joyful ... patient ... faithful.** The three commands are related: focusing on the certain hope for glory that we have in Christ enables us to handle affliction with patience (see especially 5:5), and prayer taps into this distinctly countercultural mindset (1 Thess 5:16–18).

**12:14** Paul's instructions in Romans 12–13 often reflect the teaching of Jesus. The parallel is very clear here (see Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27–28).

**12:16** **Do not be proud.** While broadly applicable, this manifestation of sincere love might apply specifically to the situation of the Roman Christians, especially the Gentile ones (see v. 3; 11:18, 25; 14:3, 10, 13). **be willing to associate with people of low position.** The NIV text note gives an alternate interpretation, taking the Greek for "people of low position" to refer to the low position itself.

12:17 <sup>a</sup>Pr 20:22  
<sup>y</sup>2Co 8:21

12:18 <sup>a</sup>Mk 9:50;  
Ro 14:19

12:19 <sup>a</sup>Lev 19:18;  
Pr 20:22; 24:29  
<sup>b</sup>Dt 32:35

12:20 <sup>a</sup>Pr 25:21, 22;  
Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27

13:1 <sup>a</sup>Titus 3:1;  
1Pe 2:13, 14 <sup>a</sup>Da 2:21;  
Jn 19:11

13:3 <sup>1</sup>Pe 2:14

13:4 <sup>a</sup>1Th 4:6

13:7 <sup>a</sup>Mt 17:25; 22:17,  
21; Lk 23:2

<sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil.<sup>x</sup> Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.<sup>y</sup> <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.<sup>z</sup> <sup>19</sup>Do not take revenge,<sup>a</sup> my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"<sup>ab</sup> says the Lord. <sup>20</sup>On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.  
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."<sup>bc</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

### Submission to Governing Authorities

**13** Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities,<sup>d</sup> for there is no authority except that which God has established.<sup>e</sup> The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup>Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup>For 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 you will be commended.<sup>f</sup> <sup>4</sup>For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup>Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

<sup>6</sup>This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. <sup>7</sup>Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes;<sup>h</sup> if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

<sup>a</sup> 19 Deut. 32:35    <sup>b</sup> 20 Prov. 25:21,22

**12:17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil.** Another possible reference to the teaching of Jesus (Matt 5:39–42, 44–45; cf. 1 Thess 5:15; 1 Pet 3:9). **do what is right in the eyes of everyone.** The explicit qualification "if it is possible" in v. 18 is implicit here also. Christians cannot (and should not) please everyone, but they should make "the teaching about God our Savior attractive" (Titus 2:10) by the way they love people inside and outside the church.

**12:18 live at peace with everyone.** See Matt 5:9; Jas 3:18.

**12:19 leave room for God's wrath.** Recognizing that God will judge all people in absolute equity means that believers should feel no compulsion to right all wrongs themselves.

**12:20 you will heap burning coals on his head.** Paul might mean that our kindness to enemies deepens the seriousness of their sin and so brings greater judgment upon them ("burning" and "fire" are frequent metaphors for judgment in the OT). But Paul more likely means that our kindness might result in their repentance (see Prov 25:21–22, from which Paul quotes; see also note on Prov 25:22).

**12:21 evil ... good.** The exposition of the many dimensions of love ends where it began (see v. 9).

**13:1–7 Submission to Governing Authorities.** Paul turns his attention to governing authorities because they are God's "agents of wrath" (v. 4), charged with judging evil in this world (see 12:19). Believers, because they are committed to Christ as Lord, may be tempted to ignore or even stand against secular rulers, but believers must recognize the place of government in God's providential ordering of the world (vv. 1, 5).

**13:1 be subject.** Or "be submissive." To submit means to recognize one's place under someone else in a hierarchy that God himself established (1 Cor 14:32, 34; Eph 5:21; Col 3:18; Titus 2:5, 9; 3:1; 1 Pet 3:1, 5). So submission will usually result in obeying the "authority" placed over us. But crowning all hierarchies is God, so our submitting to secular rulers must always take place in light of our allegiance to

our ultimate authority: God (see Acts 4:18–20). **governing authorities.** In Paul's day, these "authorities" would have included everyone from the Roman emperor down to local bureaucrats. **God has established ... established by God.** The Bible consistently recognizes that God's sovereignty extends to secular rulers (e.g., 1 Sam 12:8; Prov 8:15–16; Isa 41:2–4; 45:1–7; Jer 2:7, 10; 27:5–6; Dan 2:21, 37–38; 4:17).

**13:2 judgment.** Either the punishment inflicted by secular rulers or, perhaps more likely, God's judgment.

**13:3** Paul describes secular rulers as they should function, not as they always do function. He knows from firsthand experience and from the long history of his own people that rulers do not always reward good and punish evil.

**13:4 your good.** For both individual believers and society as a whole. **sword.** A symbol of the force that the Roman Empire used to enforce order. Paul clearly acknowledges that government has the right to use force to punish wrongdoing; whether this force includes capital punishment is debated.

**13:5** Paul succinctly summarizes his two points in vv. 1b–4: believers submit to rulers out of fear of being punished for wrongdoing (vv. 3–4) and because they recognize that God has appointed those rulers (vv. 1b–2). On this reading, "conscience" refers to a sense of right and wrong (see 2:15; 9:1). But it can also refer to the painful knowledge of a wrong that one has committed. If this is the meaning here, then Paul warns believers that they will have a sense of wrongdoing if they do not submit to the authorities.

**13:6** The issue of paying taxes may reflect the influence of Jesus' teaching; he delivered his famous maxim "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matt 22:21) in the midst of a discussion about taxes. It is also possible that Paul has an eye on the Roman Christians since secular historians mention a "tax revolt" in Rome at about the time Paul writes Romans.

## Love Fulfills the Law

<sup>8</sup>Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.<sup>i</sup> <sup>9</sup>The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,”<sup>aj</sup> and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>bk</sup> <sup>10</sup>Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.<sup>l</sup>

## The Day Is Near

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

## The Weak and the Strong

**14** Accept the one whose faith is weak,<sup>t</sup> without quarreling over disputable matters. <sup>2</sup>One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt<sup>u</sup> the one who does not, and the one who does

<sup>a</sup> 9 Exodus 20:13–15, 17; Deut. 5:17–19, 21 <sup>b</sup> 9 Lev. 19:18 <sup>c</sup> 14 In contexts like this, the Greek word for *flesh* (*sarx*) refers to the sinful state of human beings, often presented as a power in opposition to the Spirit.

**13:8** <sup>i</sup>ver 10; Jn 13:34; Gal 5:14; Col 3:14  
**13:9** <sup>j</sup>Ex 20:13–15, 17; Dt 5:17–19, 21  
<sup>k</sup>Lev 19:18; Mt 19:19  
**13:10** <sup>l</sup>ver 8; Mt 22:39, 40  
**13:11** <sup>m</sup>1Co 7:29–31; 10:11 <sup>n</sup>Eph 5:14; 1Th 5:5, 6  
**13:12** <sup>o</sup>1Jn 2:8  
<sup>p</sup>Eph 5:11 <sup>q</sup>Eph 6:11, 13  
**13:13** <sup>r</sup>Gal 5:20, 21  
**13:14** <sup>s</sup>Gal 5:27; 5:16; Eph 4:24  
**14:1** <sup>t</sup>Ro 15:1; 1Co 8:9–12  
**14:3** <sup>u</sup>Lk 18:9

**13:8–10** *Love Fulfills the Law.* Paul returns to the key Christian virtue of love (12:9–21).

**13:8** **Let no debt remain outstanding.** Not “never incur a debt” but “make sure that you pay debts you incur on time.” **continuing debt.** There is one debt Christians will never discharge: the debt to love. As often in the NT, the focus is on the obligation Christians have toward “one another” (fellow believers; cf. Gal 6:10). But believers are also called to love all people (see 12:9–21).

**13:9** **The commandments.** Paul cites, respectively, the seventh, sixth, eighth, and tenth commandments from the Decalogue (Exod 20:13–17; Deut 5:17–21). This sequence is also found in some manuscripts of the Septuagint (the pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT) and in other Jewish writings. **Love your neighbor as yourself.** Paul once again echoes Jesus (Matt 22:34–40), who, when asked what is the greatest commandment in the law, cited the command to love God from Deut 6:5 and this command to love one’s neighbor from Lev 19:18. As Jesus teaches so memorably in the parable of the Good Samaritan, the “neighbor” whom we must love is anyone the Lord puts in our path (Luke 10:25–37).

**13:10** **love is the fulfillment of the law.** See also v. 8. Genuine love for others inevitably leads us to obey all the other commandments that set forth our obligations to other humans.

**13:11–14** *The Day Is Near.* Paul frames his call to a distinctly Christian lifestyle with reminders of the nature of the time in which believers live: rescued from this evil age (see 12:2 and note); living in “the daytime” (v. 13), the time when God’s plan has come to fulfillment; and looking ahead to the day when our salvation will be complete (v. 11).

**13:11** **this.** Everything Paul commands in 12:1–13:10, **our salvation is nearer now.** Paul often uses the language of “salvation” to refer to the ultimate completion of God’s work in our lives—a work that will not be finished until Christ returns and transforms our bodies so that we can enjoy the eternal kingdom of God (see 5:9–10 and note).

**13:12** “Night” (and “darkness”) and “day” (and “light”) were ways of referring, respectively, to evil and good behavior in Paul’s day (and ours). But “day” also alludes to the OT predictions about the day of the Lord, when God intervenes to save his people and judge their enemies (e.g., Isa 27; Jer 30:8–9; Joel 2:32; 3:18; Obad 15–17; cf. 1 Cor 3:13; 5:5; 2 Cor 6:2; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1 Thess 5:2–8; 2 Thess 2:2–3; 2 Tim

1:12, 18; 4:8; see note on Amos 2:16). In keeping with NT teaching elsewhere, that day, when Christ returns to fully redeem his people, is imminent (1 Cor 7:29; Phil 4:5; Jas 5:9; 1 Pet 4:7; 1 John 2:18; see note on Amos 2:16).

**13:13** **daytime.** Or simply “day,” probably referring to the inaugurated “day of the Lord” (see note on v. 12).

**13:14** **clothe yourselves.** See also Gal 3:27. Paul often uses the imagery of putting on clothes to urge believers to adopt the new way of life in Christ (v. 12; Eph 4:24; 6:11, 14; Col 3:10, 12; 1 Thess 5:8). The imagery may come from the early Christian baptism ritual in which new converts would put on a new set of clothes to symbolize their transition to a new existence.

**14:1–15:13** *The Weak and the Strong.* Christians in Rome were divided over whether believers needed to continue to observe certain traditional Jewish practices derived from the law of Moses. Paul labels the Christian who thinks that believers should continue to observe those Jewish practices as “one whose faith is weak” (14:1); Paul labels those who do not believe that these practices are necessary as the “strong” (15:1). Paul urges them to live in peace with each other, respecting the opinions of believers they might differ with on this issue. While dealing with a first-century problem, Paul’s advice is timeless. He gives believers guidelines on how to get along when they disagree about issues that are not central to the faith. See also the somewhat parallel passage in 1 Cor 8:1–11:1.

**14:1–23** *Do Not Judge Each Other.* Paul addresses both the “weak” and the “strong,” but he focuses special attention on the need for the strong to give up their rights to avoid creating spiritual problems for the weak.

**14:1** **the one whose faith is weak.** A person who is not convinced that their faith in Christ gives them liberty to engage in certain kinds of behavior.

**14:2** **eats only vegetables.** Refrains from eating meat (see v. 6). While the Mosaic law does not forbid meat, many Jews living in pagan environments would refrain from eating meat because of fears that it might have some association with pagan religion (see Dan 1:3–16).

**14:3** **God has accepted them.** Paul refrains from correcting either the “strong” or the “weak,” showing that he views the issue dividing them as belonging to the *adiaphora*—practices that Scripture neither requires nor prohibits.

14:3 <sup>a</sup> Col 2:16  
 14:4 <sup>w</sup> Jas 4:12  
 14:5 <sup>x</sup> Gal 4:10  
 14:6 <sup>y</sup> Mt 14:19;  
 1Co 10:30,31; 1Ti 4:3,4  
 14:7 <sup>z</sup> 2Co 5:15; Gal 2:20  
 14:8 <sup>a</sup> Php 1:20  
 14:9 <sup>b</sup> Rev 1:18  
<sup>c</sup> 2Co 5:15  
 14:10 <sup>d</sup> 2Co 5:10  
 14:11 <sup>e</sup> Isa 45:23;  
 Php 2:10,11  
 14:12 <sup>f</sup> Mt 12:36; 1Pe 4:5  
 14:13 <sup>g</sup> Mt 7:1  
 14:14 <sup>h</sup> Ac 10:15  
<sup>i</sup> 1Co 8:7  
 14:15 <sup>j</sup> Eph 5:2  
<sup>k</sup> 1Co 8:11  
 14:16 <sup>l</sup> 1Co 10:30  
 14:17 <sup>m</sup> 1Co 8:8  
<sup>n</sup> Ro 15:13  
 14:18 <sup>o</sup> 2Co 8:21  
 14:19 <sup>p</sup> Ps 34:14;  
 Ro 12:18; Heb 12:14  
<sup>q</sup> Ro 15:2; 2Co 12:19  
 14:20 <sup>r</sup> ver 15

not eat everything must not judge<sup>v</sup> the one who does, for God has accepted them. <sup>4</sup>Who are you to judge someone else's servant?<sup>w</sup> To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

<sup>5</sup>One person considers one day more sacred than another;<sup>x</sup> another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. <sup>6</sup>Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God;<sup>y</sup> and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. <sup>7</sup>For none of us lives for ourselves alone,<sup>z</sup> and none of us dies for ourselves alone. <sup>8</sup>If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.<sup>a</sup> <sup>9</sup>For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life<sup>b</sup> so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>10</sup>You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister<sup>d</sup>? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.<sup>d</sup> <sup>11</sup>It is written:

“As surely as I live,” says the Lord,  
 “every knee will bow before me;  
 every tongue will acknowledge God.”<sup>e</sup>

<sup>12</sup>So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Therefore let us stop passing judgment<sup>g</sup> on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. <sup>14</sup>I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself.<sup>h</sup> But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean.<sup>i</sup> <sup>15</sup>If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love.<sup>j</sup> Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died.<sup>k</sup> <sup>16</sup>Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil.<sup>l</sup> <sup>17</sup>For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking,<sup>m</sup> but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,<sup>n</sup> <sup>18</sup>because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval.<sup>o</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace<sup>p</sup> and to mutual edification.<sup>q</sup> <sup>20</sup>Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.<sup>r</sup> All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat any-

<sup>a</sup> 10 The Greek word for *brother or sister* (*adelphos*) refers here to a believer, whether man or woman, as part of God's family; also in verses 13, 15 and 21. <sup>b</sup> 11 Isaiah 45:23

**14:5 one day more sacred than another.** Probably Jewish ceremonial days as well as the Sabbath. See also Gal 4:10; Col 2:16. **fully convinced in their own mind.** A principle that runs through this passage (see vv. 14, 16, 22–23). Paul does not want a person to be forced to do something that their conscience is telling them not to do (see 1 Cor 8:7, 10, 12).

**14:6 does so to the Lord.** Again, Paul views both the “weak” and the “strong” as sincere believers acting out of good motives.

**14:7–9** Christ's death and resurrection establishes his lordship, which extends to every part of the believer's life.

**14:10 You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister?** Addressed to the “weak” believer who judges the “strong” believer for ignoring standard Jewish piety (v. 3). **why do you treat them with contempt?** Addressed to the “strong” believer who views with disdain and condemnation the “weak” believer's insistence on clinging to certain rules. **we will all stand before God's judgment seat.** It is God, not our fellow believers, to whom each Christian is ultimately answerable. We should not let other believers force us to violate our conscience, nor should we presume to stand in the place of God by judging fellow believers.

**14:13** The two parts of this verse bridge the two parts of ch. 14: the first summarizes vv. 1–12, and the second introduces the key idea of vv. 14–23. **stumbling block or obstacle.** Originally referred to, respectively, as (1) a physical object that might cause one to trip and fall and (2) a trap or snare. The Bible widely uses both words to refer to matters that might cause a believer to stray from their commitment to God (v. 20; cf. Exod 23:33; Josh 23:13; Ps 106:36; Isa 8:14; Matt 18:7; 1 Cor 8:9; 1 John 2:10).

**14:14 nothing is unclean in itself.** Following the lead of Jesus, who “declared all foods clean” (Mark 7:19), Paul is convinced that Christians no longer need to view any food as forbidden (see also Acts 10:15, 28; 1 Tim 4:4; Titus 1:15). **for that person it is unclean.** Pious Jews who had been taught since birth that faithfulness to God required them to avoid certain food would not easily have lost this scruple when they became Christians. As he does throughout this passage, Paul recognizes the seriousness of violating one's conscience (see vv. 5, 23; cf. 1 Cor 8:4–7).

**14:15 destroyed because of what you eat.** Addressed to the “strong” in faith. The concern is that the “strong” believer's eating might put pressure on the “weak” believer to eat also, which would violate the “weak” believer's conscience and thus cause them spiritual harm. **you are no longer acting in love.** All believers should be motivated in their behavior not by their own rights but by the central Christian virtue of love for others (12:9; 13:8–10). **destroy someone for whom Christ died.** Bring ultimate spiritual ruin on a person for whom Christ gave his life. It is not clear whether Paul views this as a real possibility or whether he uses very strong language to motivate believers to act in a loving way toward each other.

**14:16 what you know is good.** The freedom in Christ to eat any food or treat every day the same.

**14:17 righteousness.** Either one's righteous status before God (4:3; 5:17) or behavior that meets God's standard (e.g., 6:16, 18).

**14:20 the work of God.** Perhaps the individual believer, “for whom Christ died” (v. 15), but more likely the Christian community. **All food is clean.** See note on v. 14.

thing that causes someone else to stumble.<sup>s 21</sup> It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>22</sup>So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn<sup>u</sup> himself by what he approves.<sup>23</sup> But whoever has doubts<sup>v</sup> is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.<sup>a</sup>

**15** We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak<sup>w</sup> and not to please ourselves.<sup>2</sup> Each of us should please our neighbors for their good,<sup>x</sup> to build them up.<sup>y</sup> <sup>3</sup>For even Christ did not please himself<sup>z</sup> but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”<sup>ba</sup> <sup>4</sup>For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us,<sup>b</sup> so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

<sup>5</sup>May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind<sup>c</sup> toward each other that Christ Jesus had, <sup>6</sup>so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father<sup>d</sup> of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>7</sup>Accept one another,<sup>e</sup> then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. <sup>8</sup>For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews<sup>cf</sup> on behalf of God’s truth, so that the promises<sup>g</sup> made to the patriarchs might be confirmed<sup>9</sup> and, moreover, that the Gentiles<sup>h</sup> might glorify God<sup>i</sup> for his mercy. As it is written:

“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles;  
I will sing the praises of your name.”<sup>dj</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Again, it says,

“Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people.”<sup>ek</sup>

<sup>11</sup>And again,

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;  
let all the peoples extol him.”<sup>fl</sup>

<sup>12</sup>And again, Isaiah says,

<sup>a</sup> 23 Some manuscripts place 16:25-27 here; others after 15:33.

<sup>b</sup> 3 Psalm 69:9

<sup>c</sup> 8 Greek *circumcision*

<sup>d</sup> 9 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49

<sup>e</sup> 10 Deut. 32:43

<sup>f</sup> 11 Psalm 117:1

**14:21 drink wine.** Perhaps simply another matter that illustrates Paul’s general point, but probably another of the issues (along with eating meat and observing special days) that divided the “strong” and the “weak.” Jews often abstained from wine to avoid possible ritual contamination (Dan 1:3–16).

**14:22 keep between yourself and God.** The “strong” believer does not need to give up their liberty, but they must be willing to avoid practicing their liberty in situations that might cause spiritual harm to others.

**14:23 from faith ... from faith.** What one’s faith convinces a person they can or cannot do (see note on v. 1).

**15:1–13 Accept Each Other in Christ.** Paul concludes his plea for unity among the Roman Christians by exhorting the “strong” (vv. 1–4), summarizing his key concern (vv. 5–7), and rehearsing the theological point that underlies his exhortation: the equality of Jew and Gentile in the new covenant people of God (vv. 8–13).

**15:1 We who are strong.** Those who are convinced that their faith gives them liberty to eat anything (14:2), treat every day alike (14:5), and drink wine (14:21). Even though he is a Jewish Christian, Paul aligns himself with the “strong” (see 14:14). **bear with the failings of the weak.** See Gal 6:2.

**15:2 neighbors.** Alludes to the love command of Lev 19:18, quoted in Rom 13:9 (see note).

**15:3 Christ did not please himself.** Christ went to the cross at the will of the Father, sacrificing himself for the sake of others (Mark 14:36; 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:6–7). **The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.** A quotation from Psalms, from which NT authors frequently draw to describe Christ’s passion (Matt 27:34; Mark 15:35–36;

Luke 23:36; John 15:25; 19:28–29). Here Paul refers to how Christ (the “me” of Ps 69:9) on the cross suffered for doing the Father’s will.

**15:4 everything that was written in the past was written to teach us.** A fundamental principle in the Christian understanding of the Bible. What God caused to be written in the OT has ultimate relevance to Christians, who experience the fulfillment of the OT promises (see also 1 Cor 10:6, 11; 2 Tim 3:16–17). Of course the many different kinds of material in the OT relate to Christians in different ways.

**15:5 the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had.** A mindset that puts the interests of others ahead of our own (Phil 2:4–7).

**15:7 Accept one another.** Not grudgingly accept into our fellowship believers we disagree with but welcome them warmly as true brothers and sisters.

**15:8 a servant of the Jews.** Christ focused his earthly mission on his fellow Jews (Matt 15:24). Israel, as Paul also insists, has a certain priority in God’s plan by virtue of being chosen as God’s OT people (1:16; 3:1–2; 11:1–2, 28).

**15:9–12** This series of OT quotations (see NIV text notes) focuses on the participation of Gentiles in the worship of the God of Israel. By choosing OT texts that focus on praising God and rejoicing in him, Paul reinforces the concern of v. 6.

**15:9 that the Gentiles might glorify God.** Summarizes a keynote in the theology of Romans: God faithfully fulfills his promises to his people Israel while at the same time accomplishing his purpose to integrate Gentiles fully into the people of God (see especially 11:11–32).

**15:12 in him the Gentiles will hope.** The NIV of Isa 11:10 (which Paul

**14:20** <sup>s</sup> 1Co 8:9-12

**14:21** <sup>i</sup> 1Co 8:13

**14:22** <sup>u</sup> 1Jn 3:21

**14:23** <sup>v</sup> ver 5

**15:1** <sup>w</sup> Ro 14:1; Gal 6:1, 2; 1Th 5:14

**15:2** <sup>x</sup> 1Co 10:33

<sup>y</sup> Ro 14:19

**15:3** <sup>z</sup> 2Co 8:9 <sup>a</sup> Ps 69:9

**15:4** <sup>b</sup> Ro 4:23, 24

**15:5** <sup>c</sup> Ro 12:16;

1Co 1:10

**15:6** <sup>d</sup> Rev 1:6

**15:7** <sup>e</sup> Ro 14:1

**15:8** <sup>f</sup> Mt 15:24; Ac 3:25,

26 <sup>g</sup> 2Co 1:20

**15:9** <sup>h</sup> Ro 3:29 <sup>i</sup> Mt 9:8

<sup>j</sup> 2Sa 22:50; Ps 18:49

**15:10** <sup>k</sup> Dt 32:43

**15:11** <sup>l</sup> Ps 117:1

15:12 <sup>m</sup>Rev 5:5  
<sup>n</sup>Isa 11:10; Mt 12:21  
 15:13 <sup>a</sup>Ro 14:17  
<sup>p</sup>ver 19; 1Co 2:4;  
 1Th 1:5  
 15:14 <sup>q</sup>Eph 5:9  
<sup>r</sup>2Pe 1:12  
 15:15 <sup>a</sup>Ro 12:3  
 15:16 <sup>s</sup>Ac 9:15; Ro 11:13  
<sup>u</sup>Ro 1:1 <sup>v</sup>Isa 66:20  
 15:17 <sup>w</sup>Php 3:3  
<sup>x</sup>Heb 2:17  
 15:18 <sup>y</sup>Ac 15:12; 21:19;  
 Ro 1:5 <sup>z</sup>Ro 16:26  
 15:19 <sup>a</sup>Jn 4:48; Ac 19:11  
<sup>b</sup>ver 13 <sup>c</sup>Ac 22:17-21  
 15:20 <sup>d</sup>2Co 10:15, 16  
 15:21 <sup>e</sup>Isa 52:15  
 15:22 <sup>f</sup>Ro 1:13  
 15:23 <sup>g</sup>Ac 19:21;  
 Ro 1:10, 11  
 15:24 <sup>h</sup>ver 28

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

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

### Paul the Minister to the Gentiles

<sup>14</sup>I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness,<sup>q</sup> filled with knowledge<sup>r</sup> and competent to instruct one another. <sup>15</sup>Yet I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me<sup>s</sup> <sup>16</sup>to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.<sup>t</sup> He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God,<sup>u</sup> so that the Gentiles might become an offering<sup>v</sup> acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus<sup>w</sup> in my service to God.<sup>x</sup> <sup>18</sup>I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles<sup>y</sup> to obey God<sup>z</sup> by what I have said and done — <sup>19</sup>by the power of signs and wonders,<sup>a</sup> through the power of the Spirit of God.<sup>b</sup> So from Jerusalem<sup>c</sup> all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. <sup>20</sup>It 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.<sup>d</sup> <sup>21</sup>Rather, as it is written:

“Those who were not told about him will see,  
 and those who have not heard will understand.”<sup>be</sup>

<sup>22</sup>This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.<sup>f</sup>

### Paul's Plan to Visit Rome

<sup>23</sup>But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been long-ing for many years to visit you,<sup>g</sup> <sup>24</sup>I plan to do so when I go to Spain.<sup>h</sup> I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a

<sup>a</sup> 12 Isaiah 11:10 (see Septuagint)    <sup>b</sup> 21 Isaiah 52:15 (see Septuagint)

is quoting) reads “the nations will rally to him.” The difference is a matter of wording only; Paul, as usual, is using the Septuagint (the pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT).

**15:14 — 16:27 The Letter Closing.** This includes many of the standard elements in such closings: the author's travel plans (15:14–29), a request for prayer (15:30–33), a reference to ministry associates (16:1–2, 21–23), greetings (16:3–16), and a doxology (16:25–27). Each of these elements is much longer in Romans than in most of the other NT letters.

**15:14–22 Paul the Minister to the Gentiles.** Paul reminds the Romans of his past ministry.

**15:14** As he does in the letter opening (1:8–12), Paul reveals a deft diplomatic touch by speaking so highly of believers who live in a city he has never visited.

**15:16 a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.** Paul's right to write “quite boldly” (v. 15) to the Roman Christians is based on God's own appointment of him to be “the apostle to the Gentiles” (see 11:13 and note; cf. Gal 1:15–16). **the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God.** Describing his apostolic ministry in priestly terminology, Paul identifies the offering he makes as the Gentiles themselves. Paul may have in mind the prophecy of Isa 66:19–20, which speaks of declaring God's glory “among the nations” and of bringing people from “all the nations” to Jerusalem as an “offering to the Lord.”

**15:19 signs and wonders.** Paul's ministry was accompanied by authenticating miracles (Acts 14:8–10; 16:16–18; 19:11–12; 20:9–12; 28:8–9; 2 Cor 12:12), much as God revealed his power through the “signs and wonders” at the time of the exodus (Exod 7:3; see also Exod 11:9, 10). **from Jerusalem all the way around to**

**Illyricum.** For the ministry of Paul in Jerusalem, see Acts 9:28–29. The NT never refers to a ministry of Paul in Illyricum, a Roman province in the region of modern-day Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, and Albania. But Paul might mean that he ministered “as far as the border of” Illyricum (e.g., in Macedonia and Greece). Paul's Greek suggests the idea of an arc, and an arc drawn from Jerusalem to Illyricum would touch on the regions in the eastern Mediterranean where Paul planted churches. **I have fully proclaimed the gospel.** In key cities throughout this region, Paul planted vibrant churches that can carry on the work of evangelism in their own locales.

**15:20–21** Paul is convinced that God has called him to a ministry of pioneer church planting, a ministry he thinks Isaiah's prophecy about the servant of the Lord foreshadows (Isa 52:15); Paul applies language from Isaiah's “servant” texts to himself elsewhere (see 1:1; Gal 1:15–16; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23).

**15:23–33 Paul's Plan to Visit Rome.** Paul shifts his focus to his present situation and his future plans.

**15:23 no more place for me to work in these regions.** Paul has completed his ministry of initial church planting.

**15:24 Spain.** The entire Iberian Peninsula in Paul's day (i.e., the territory now associated with the countries of Spain and Portugal), which had become a Roman province only recently. Paul might have chosen to preach in Spain because he identified it with places such as Tarshish or “the distant islands” in OT prophecy (e.g., Isa 66:19). **assist me on my journey there.** Spain was a long way from Paul's “sending church” (Antioch), and he needed financial and logistical help from a church closer to his new ministry area.

while. <sup>25</sup>Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem<sup>i</sup> in the service<sup>j</sup> of the Lord's people there. <sup>26</sup>For Macedonia<sup>k</sup> and Achaia<sup>l</sup> were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup>They 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.<sup>m</sup> <sup>28</sup>So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. <sup>29</sup>I know that when I come to you,<sup>n</sup> I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

<sup>30</sup>I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit,<sup>o</sup> to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.<sup>p</sup> <sup>31</sup>Pray that I may be kept safe<sup>q</sup> from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may be favorably received by the Lord's people there, <sup>32</sup>so that I may come to you<sup>r</sup> with joy, by God's will,<sup>s</sup> and in your company be refreshed.<sup>t</sup> <sup>33</sup>The God of peace<sup>u</sup> be with you all. Amen.

### Personal Greetings

**16** I commend<sup>v</sup> to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon<sup>a,b</sup> of the church in Cenchreae.<sup>w</sup> <sup>2</sup>I ask you to receive her in the Lord<sup>x</sup> in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

<sup>3</sup>Greet Priscilla<sup>c</sup> and Aquila,<sup>y</sup> my co-workers in Christ Jesus.<sup>z</sup> <sup>4</sup>They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

<sup>5</sup>Greet also the church that meets at their house.<sup>a</sup>

Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert<sup>b</sup> to Christ in the province of Asia.

<sup>a</sup> 1 Or *servant*    <sup>b</sup> 1 The word *deacon* refers here to a Christian designated to serve with the overseers/elders of the church in a variety of ways; similarly in Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8,12.    <sup>c</sup> 3 Greek *Prisca*, a variant of *Priscilla*

**15:25** <sup>1</sup>Ac 19:21  
<sup>2</sup>Ac 24:17  
**15:26** <sup>3</sup>Ac 16:9; 2Co 8:1  
<sup>4</sup>Ac 18:12  
**15:27** <sup>5</sup>1Co 9:11  
**15:29** <sup>6</sup>Ro 1:10,11  
**15:30** <sup>7</sup>Gal 5:22  
<sup>8</sup>2Co 1:11; Col 4:12  
**15:31** <sup>9</sup>2Th 3:2  
**15:32** <sup>10</sup>Ro 1:10,13  
<sup>11</sup>Ac 18:21 <sup>12</sup>1Co 16:18  
**15:33** <sup>13</sup>Ro 16:20;  
2Co 13:11; Php 4:9;  
1Th 5:23; Heb 13:20  
**16:1** <sup>14</sup>2Co 3:1 <sup>15</sup>Ac 18:18  
**16:2** <sup>16</sup>Php 2:29  
**16:3** <sup>17</sup>Ac 18:2 <sup>18</sup>ver 7,9,  
10  
**16:5** <sup>19</sup>1Co 16:19;  
Col 4:15; Phm 2  
<sup>20</sup>1Co 16:15

**15:25 the service of the Lord's people there.** The "collection" for impoverished Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Paul mentions this important project in all three letters written on his third missionary journey (here; 1 Cor 16:1–2; 2 Cor 8–9).

**15:26 Macedonia and Achaia.** Christians living in these Roman provinces, which included the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. **the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem.** Several severe famines afflicted Jerusalem and its surrounding territory in Paul's lifetime (Acts 11:27–28 refers to a famine affecting the entire Roman Empire).

**15:27 the Jews' spiritual blessings.** The ancestors of the Jews were the original recipients of the promises. Gentiles enjoy the blessings God promised his people only by being included in the one people of God (11:17–24). See "The Pattern of God's Saving Plan for All People: Jews and Gentiles in Romans 11," p. XXXX.

**15:31 Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea.** Paul's bold turn to the Gentiles in his preaching of the gospel was very contentious among Jews, especially in the Jewish homeland of Judea. He was right to be worried about his reception; when he arrived in Jerusalem, Jews misconstrued his actions in the temple and rioted against him (Acts 21:27–32). **favorably received.** Paul viewed the collection not only as a work of charity but also as a way to ease the developing tension between Jews and Gentiles in the church of his day. Getting Gentiles to give money to their Jewish brothers and sisters and getting the Jewish believers to accept it was a practical way of binding the two groups together.

**16:1–27 Personal Greetings.** Paul had been engaged in missionary work for 25 years when he wrote Romans. He had developed relationships with believers scattered all across the eastern Mediterranean world.

**16:1–2** Phoebe was a prominent Christian who was planning to travel to Rome. Paul probably took the opportunity of her planned trip to entrust her with the delivery of his letter to the Roman Christians.

**16:1 deacon.** Greek *diakonos*; could also be translated "servant" (see NIV text note). But calling Phoebe a *diakonos* "of the church" suggests that she holds some kind of official position. Her apparent wealth (she was a "benefactor" [v. 2]) fits well with the office of deacon, which apparently focused on financially and logistically supporting the church (1 Tim 3:11 may mention female deacons [see note]; on "deacons," see also Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8–10). **Cenchreae.** A port about six miles (nine kilometers) from Corinth, where Paul is apparently located as he writes this letter (see Acts 20:2–3).

**16:2 benefactor.** The "patron," an important figure in the Greco-Roman world who used their money and influence to support various causes. Phoebe used her worldly advantages to help many believers, including Paul himself.

**16:3–16** Although Paul has never visited Rome, he has encountered many of the Christians who live there in the course of his ministry in the eastern Mediterranean. The names of people in the ancient world often signaled their ethnic origin or social status. The 24 names in these verses reveal that the Roman Christian community was very diverse, with men and women, Jews and Gentiles, and people from both the upper and lower classes (see Gal 3:28).

**16:3 Priscilla and Aquila.** Paul first met them in Corinth during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:2). They were apparently natives of Rome who, along with other Jews and Jewish Christians, had been forced to leave Rome when the emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews from the city (probably in AD 49). They not only shared Paul's passion for Christian ministry but were also in the same leather-working trade as Paul.

**16:4 risked their lives for me.** The NT does not record this incident, but the last part of this verse implies that it was widely known.

**16:5 church that meets at their house.** Christians in Paul's day did not have dedicated church buildings; they met in private homes. This list of greetings may refer to at least two other such "house churches" (see vv. 14,15). **province of Asia.** The Roman province located in western Asia Minor (see note on 2 Tim 1:15).

16:7 <sup>c</sup> ver 11, 2116:9 <sup>d</sup> ver 316:11 <sup>e</sup> ver 7, 2116:15 <sup>f</sup> ver 2 <sup>g</sup> ver 1416:16 <sup>h</sup> 1Co 16:20;

2Co 13:12; 1Th 5:26

16:17 <sup>i</sup> Gal 1:8, 9; 1Ti 1:3;

6:3; 2Th 3:6, 14; 2Jn 10

16:18 <sup>k</sup> Php 3:19 <sup>l</sup> Col 2:416:19 <sup>m</sup> Ro 1:8<sup>n</sup> Mt 10:16; 1Co 14:2016:20 <sup>o</sup> Ro 15:33<sup>p</sup> Ge 3:15 <sup>q</sup> 1Th 5:2816:21 <sup>r</sup> Ac 16:1 <sup>s</sup> Ac 13:1<sup>t</sup> Ac 17:5 <sup>u</sup> ver 7, 11<sup>6</sup> Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.<sup>7</sup> Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews<sup>c</sup> who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among<sup>a</sup> the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.<sup>8</sup> Greet Ampliatius, my dear friend in the Lord.<sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ,<sup>d</sup> and my dear friend Stachys.<sup>10</sup> Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test.

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.

<sup>11</sup> Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew.<sup>e</sup>

Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> Greet 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.

<sup>13</sup> Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.<sup>14</sup> Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them.<sup>15</sup> Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people<sup>f</sup> who are with them.<sup>g</sup><sup>16</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss.<sup>h</sup>

All the churches of Christ send greetings.

<sup>17</sup> I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned.<sup>i</sup> Keep away from them.<sup>j</sup> <sup>18</sup> For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites.<sup>k</sup> By smooth talk and flattery they deceive<sup>l</sup> the minds of naive people. <sup>19</sup> Everyone has heard<sup>m</sup> about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.<sup>n</sup><sup>20</sup> The God of peace<sup>o</sup> will soon crush<sup>p</sup> Satan under your feet.The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.<sup>q</sup><sup>21</sup> Timothy,<sup>r</sup> my co-worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius,<sup>s</sup> Jason<sup>t</sup> and Sosipater, my fellow Jews.<sup>u</sup><sup>22</sup> I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord.<sup>a</sup> 7 Or are esteemed by**16:6 Mary.** The NT mentions six persons with this name. This Mary is otherwise unknown. Paul commends her for dedicated service of Christ (see also v. 12).**16:7 Andronicus and Junia.** Probably a husband-and-wife missionary team. While the Greek word for "Junia" could denote either a woman or a man, it probably here denotes a woman. **in prison with me.** This imprisonment cannot be identified; Paul alludes to many imprisonments (2 Cor 11:23) not recorded in Acts or his letters. **outstanding among the apostles.** Or "esteemed by the apostles" (see NIV text note). In any case, the word "apostle" may not refer to the authoritative position that Paul and "the Twelve" occupied (see, e.g., 1:1; Luke 6:13). The Greek word here was also used in the sense of "accredited messenger," "representative," or "missionary" (see 1 Cor 9:5; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25).**16:8–10 Ampliatius ... Urbanus ... Stachys ... Apelles.** Common slave names. They may have been either slaves or "freedmen," former slaves who had gained their freedom.**16:10 Aristobulus.** Probably the brother of Herod Agrippa I (ruled Palestine from AD 41–44). Aristobulus was dead at the time Paul wrote Romans (see Acts 12:1–4, 19–23), so the "household" of Aristobulus refers to slaves who served the family that still went by his name.**16:12 Tryphena and Tryphosa.** Siblings were often given similar sounding names in the ancient world, so these women were probably sisters, perhaps even twins.**16:13 Rufus.** Perhaps the son of Simon of Cyrene, who carried Christ's cross on the way to his execution (Mark 15:21).**16:14–15** None of these people are otherwise known to us. Their names suggest that they were slaves or freedmen (see note on vv. 8–10).**16:16 holy kiss.** A common greeting in the ancient world generally and among Jews in particular (see also 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14).**16:17–19** A warning about false teachers is unusual in NT letter closings—especially in this case since the letter does not explicitly mention false teaching anywhere else. Paul's description of the teachers is too general to enable us to identify who they were or what they were teaching.**16:18 appetites.** Lit. "bellies," a vivid way of indicating their preoccupation with satisfying their own bodily comforts (cf. Phil 3:19). **naive people.** "Innocence" about doing evil is a good thing (v. 19), but innocence that involves ignorance about true Christian doctrine is dangerous.**16:19 wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.** Christians should have the wisdom to discern the good they should be doing, and they should be unacquainted with doing what is evil.**16:20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.** A startling juxtaposition, reminding us that the "peace" (Hebrew *šālôm* that God intends to establish involves an ultimate victory over evil. Paul alludes to the first promise of redemption given in the Garden of Eden: God promised that Eve's offspring would "crush" Satan's "head" (Gen 3:15).**16:21 Timothy.** One of Paul's closest ministry associates; he joined Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1–3) and was with Paul in Corinth as he wrote this letter to the Romans (Acts 20:3–4). **Jason.** Perhaps the same Jason with whom Paul stayed during his ministry in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5–9).**16:22 wrote down this letter.** It was customary in Paul's day for people to dictate their letters to trained scribes (amanuenses).



A Latin inscription in Corinth dating to the mid-first century AD mentions an “Erastus,” probably the same Erastus mentioned by Paul (Ro 16:23). The inscription reads: “Erastus, in return for his aedileship, laid [this pavement] at his own expense.”

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

Erastus,<sup>v</sup> who is the city’s director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings. <sup>[24]</sup><sup>a</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Now to him who is able<sup>w</sup> to establish you in accordance with my gospel,<sup>x</sup> the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery<sup>y</sup> hidden for long ages past,<sup>26</sup> but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from<sup>b</sup> faith — <sup>27</sup>to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.<sup>z</sup>

<sup>a</sup> <sup>24</sup> Some manuscripts include here *May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.*

<sup>b</sup> <sup>26</sup> Or *that is*

**16:23** <sup>v</sup>Ac 19:22

**16:25** <sup>w</sup>Eph 3:20

<sup>x</sup>Ro 2:16 <sup>y</sup>Eph 1:9;

Col 1:26, 27

**16:27** <sup>z</sup>Ro 11:36

**16:23 Gaius.** Perhaps the Gaius mentioned in 1 Cor 1:14. This Gaius may also have been known as Titius Justus, whom Acts 18:7 identifies as the person whom Paul stayed with in Corinth. **Erastus ... the city’s director of public works.** The Greek word rendered “director of public works” probably corresponds to the Latin *aedile*. An inscription discovered on an ancient block of stone in Corinth probably refers to this same Erastus: “Erastus, in return for his aedileship, laid [this pavement] at this own expense.” Acts 19:22; 2 Tim 4:20 also mention an Erastus, but the name was common enough that it is uncertain whether they refer to the same man.

**16:25–27** Some manuscripts of Romans omit this doxology or put it in

a different place in the letter. But the doxology is found in most manuscripts and is probably original.

**16:25 mystery.** Certain aspects of God’s fulfillment of his plan that were not clear before Christ came (see note on 11:25).

**16:26 prophetic writings.** The entire OT, viewed in terms of its anticipating the fulfillment of God’s purposes. The phrase corresponds to “through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures” at the beginning of the letter (1:2). **all the Gentiles.** Paul often associates the “mystery” (v. 25) with including Gentiles in the people of God (see Eph 3:6; Col 1:26–27). **obedience that comes from faith.** Another phrase that echoes the beginning of the letter (1:5).

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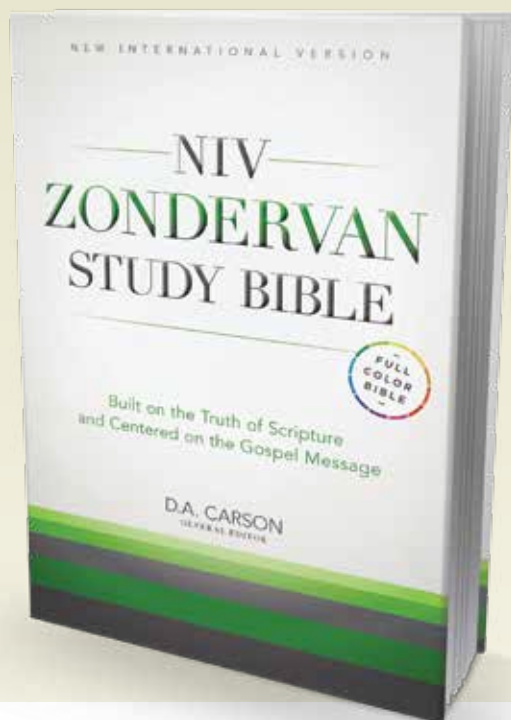
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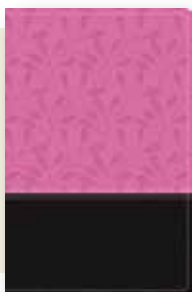
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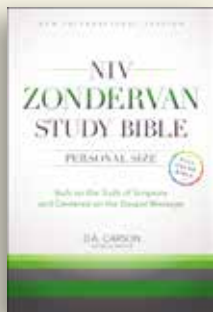
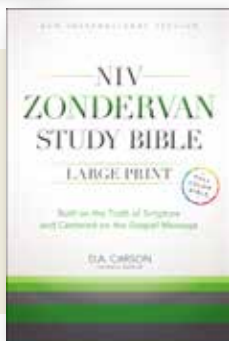
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