

Romans

Greeting and Introduction – 1:1-17

Part 1 of Greeting and Introduction – 1:1-7

1:1 Paul, a bonds slave of the Messiah Jesus, called to be an apostle, because I was individually appointed for the good news of God,¹ **1:2** which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the sacred scriptures² **1:3** concerning His Son, who, according to his human nature, came into existence from the line of David,³ **1:4** who, according to his different spirit, was designated the Son of God in a powerful way by virtue of his resurrection from the dead, Jesus the Messiah, our Lord,⁴ **1:5** through whom we received grace and apostleship for the obedience of belief for his name's sake among all the Gentiles,⁵ **1:6** among whom you also are the called of Jesus the Messiah,⁶ **1:7** to all those who are in Rome, the ones loved by God, called to be those set apart—grace to you and shalom from God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah.⁷

Part 2 of Greeting and Introduction – 1:8-13

1:8 First, I thank my God in the light of Jesus the Messiah for all of you, because your belief is being proclaimed in the whole world.⁸ **1:9** For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the good news of His Son, is my witness how repeatedly I make mention of you,⁹ **1:10** always in my prayers requesting that somehow, at last, by the will of God, I may succeed in coming to you.¹⁰ **1:11** For I long to see you, so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, so that you may be established¹¹—**1:12** to the effect that we together are mutually encouraged through each other's belief—both yours and mine—while we are among one another.¹² **1:13** Thus, I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you, so that I may have some fruit even among you, just as I also do among the rest of the Gentiles. However, so far, I have been prevented.¹³

Part 3 of Greeting and Introduction – 1:14-17

1:14 I am obligated to both the Greeks and the barbarians, and to both the intelligent and the unintelligent.¹⁴ **1:15** Thus, also, my eagerness to proclaim the good news to you who are in Rome.¹⁵ **1:16** For I am not ashamed of the good news, because it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes—for the Jew *first* and *also* for the Greek.¹⁶ **1:17** For in it the justification of God is revealed by virtue of belief for the sake of belief, just as it has been written,

But the one who is justified by belief shall live <Habakkuk 2:4>.¹⁷

Main Discussion – 1:18-11:36

Part 1 of Main Discussion – 1:18-5:21

Section 1 of Part 1 of Main Discussion – 1:18-3:20

Sub-section 1 of Section 1 of Part 1 of Main Discussion – 1:18-32

1:18 For God's wrath is set to be revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth with their unrighteousness,¹⁸ **1:19** because what can be known about God is obvious among them, for God made it obvious to them.¹⁹ **1:20** For since the creation of the universe, His invisible qualities, both His eternal power and uncreated-God-ness, have been clearly perceived, because they are intellectually grasped through the things that are created.²⁰ Therefore, they are without any defense, **1:21** because, while they know about God, they neither ascribe worth to Him as God nor thank Him. Instead, they become worthlessly unintelligent in their reasonings, and their clueless heart is darkened.²¹ **1:22** While claiming to be wise, they become fools **1:23** and exchange the majesty of the

indestructible God for an image that is the representation of destructible man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.²²

1:24 Therefore, God hands them over in the cravings of their hearts to moral uncleanness, with the result that their bodies are dishonored among them,²³ **1:25** who exchange the truth about God for the lie and worship and serve the creation instead of the Creator, who is praiseworthy into the ages. Amen.²⁴

1:26 Consequently, God hands them over to shameful passions, because their women exchange natural relations for that which is contrary to nature.²⁵ **1:27** Likewise, men also, in the midst of rejecting the natural relations of the woman, are consumed by their evil desire for one another—men committing a shameful act with men and receiving in themselves the necessary penalty for their error.²⁶

1:28 And just as they do not regard as worthwhile to include God in their understanding, God hands them over to a defective mind to do things that are morally inappropriate,²⁷ **1:29** being filled with all unrighteousness, evil, impurity, and wickedness,²⁸ full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and wishing harm to others.²⁹ They become gossips, **1:30** slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, prideful, boasters, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,³⁰ **1:31** void of understanding, agreement-breakers, without normal human affection, and unmerciful.³¹ **1:32** Although they fully understand the demands of God's justice, that those who do such things are worthy of death, they not only commit the same acts, but also join in approving of those who perform them.³²

Sub-section 2 of Section 1 of Part 1 of Main Discussion – 2:1-29

2:1 Therefore, you are without any defense, O man, everyone who judges, for when you judge another, you condemn yourself, because you who judge practice the very same things.³³

2:2 In addition, we know that the judgment of God towards those who do such things is according to truth.³⁴

2:3 However, do you reckon this, O man, who judges those who do such things and then commits the very same acts, that you will escape the judgment of God?³⁵ **2:4** Or do you have no regard for the riches of His kindness and patience and longsuffering, not realizing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?³⁶ **2:5** But in accord with your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and the revealing of the righteous judgment of God.³⁷

2:6 He will pay back each man according to his deeds³⁸—**2:7** on the one hand, eternal life to those who, in accordance with the perseverance of doing good, seek for glory, honor, and immortality,³⁹ **2:8** but, on the other hand, wrath and anger to those who, out of contentiousness, both disobey the truth and obey unrighteousness—⁴⁰ **2:9** affliction and anguish to every existing human being who does evil, to the Jew *first* and *also* to the Greek,⁴¹ **2:10** but glory, honor, and *shalom* to everyone who does good, to the Jew *first* and *also* to the Greek.⁴²

2:11 For there is no favoritism with God.⁴³ **2:12** Consequently, those who sin without the Covenant will indeed suffer destruction without the Covenant, and those who sin in the midst of the Covenant will also be judged through the Covenant.⁴⁴ **2:13** For it is not the hearers of the Covenant who are justified before God, but it is the doers of the Covenant who will be justified.⁴⁵ **2:14** For when Gentiles, who do not have the Covenant by their nature, do the things of the Covenant, these, who do not possess the Covenant, are in fact a Covenant unto themselves,⁴⁶ **2:15** who demonstrate the work of the Covenant written on their hearts, while their understanding bears witness to this and their thoughts alternately accuse or even defend them⁴⁷ **2:16** on the day when God judges the secrets of men—according to my gospel in view of the Messiah Jesus.⁴⁸

2:17 However, if you bear the name “Jew,” find security in the Covenant, boast in God,⁴⁹ **2:18** know what He commands us to do in our lives, and approve of what really counts, because you have been well taught from the Covenant,⁵⁰ **2:19** so that you are confident that you are a guide

to the blind, a light to those in darkness,⁵¹ **2:20** an instructor of fools, and a teacher of the immature, because you possess the embodiment of knowledge and truth in the Covenant...⁵²

2:21 Therefore, you who teach another, are you not teaching yourself? You who proclaim that we should not steal, are you stealing?⁵³ **2:22** You who say that we should not commit adultery, are you committing adultery? You who abhor idols, are you “robbing temples?”⁵⁴ **2:23** You who boast in the Covenant, are you dishonoring God through your violation of the Covenant?⁵⁵ **2:24** For it has been written,

The name of God is being treated disrespectfully among the Gentiles on account of you
<Isaiah 52:5>.⁵⁶

2:25 On the one hand, circumcision is valuable if you practice the Covenant. But if you are a transgressor of the Covenant, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.⁵⁷ **2:26** Therefore, if the uncircumcised man guards the requirements of the Covenant, will not his uncircumcision be considered as circumcision,⁵⁸ **2:27** and will not he who is by his very nature uncircumcised, because he keeps the Covenant, judge you, who, in spite of the letter of the Covenant and circumcision, are a transgressor of the Covenant?⁵⁹

2:28 The true Jew is not the one who is such outwardly, and neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh,⁶⁰ **2:29** but the true Jew is one in his hidden, innermost parts. And circumcision is of the heart by means of the Spirit, not of the letter. In addition, his praise is not from men but from God.⁶¹

Sub-section 3 of Section 1 of Part 1 of Main Discussion – 3:1-20

3:1 What then is the advantage of being a Jew, or what is the benefit of circumcision?⁶² **3:2** Great in every respect! Primarily, because they were entrusted with the messages of God.⁶³ **3:3** But what if some of them have not believed? Will their unbelief render null and void that which God entrusted to them?⁶⁴ **3:4** Absolutely not! Let God be someone who speaks truth, and let every man be someone who speaks lies, just as it was written,

So that You may be considered right when You speak and prevail when You judge <Psalm 51:4b>.⁶⁵

3:5 In addition, if our unrighteousness reveals God’s righteousness, what shall we say? God, who deals out wrath, is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in regard to what He does towards a man.)⁶⁶ **3:6** Absolutely not! Otherwise, how will God judge the world?⁶⁷ **3:7** If, by my lie, the truth of God is magnified to His glory, why am I still condemned as an evil-doer?⁶⁸ **3:8** In addition, it is not as we are slanderously accused of saying and as some declare that we say, “Let us do evil so that good may come.” Their condemnation is just.⁶⁹

3:9 So what are we saying? Do we have first position? Not at all. For we previously accused both Jews and Greeks—all of them—of being under sin,⁷⁰ **3:10** just as it has been written,

There is no one doing what is right <cf. Ps. 13:1 (LXX); Ps. 14:1 (Heb., Eng.)>,⁷¹

3:11 There is no one who understands;

No one who seeks after God <cf. Ps. 13:2 (LXX); Ps. 14:2 (Heb., Eng.)>.⁷²

3:12 All have turned away; together they have become worthless.

There is no one who does good, not even one.⁷³

3:13 Their throat is an open grave;

They deceive with their tongues;

The poison of snakes is behind their lips.⁷⁴

3:14 Their mouth is full of curses and bitter hatred.⁷⁵

3:15 Their feet are swift to shed blood.⁷⁶

3:16 Destruction and misery are in their paths.⁷⁷

3:17 Indeed, they do not know the route to shalom.⁷⁸

3:18 There is no fear of God before their eyes <vs. 12-18 – Ps. 13:3 (LXX)>.⁷⁹

3:19 We know that whatever the Covenant says, it speaks to those who are enclosed within the Covenant, with the result that every mouth is silenced and the whole world is under the judgment of God.⁸⁰ 3:20 For this reason, no flesh will be justified before Him on the basis of works of the Covenant, because recognition of sin is what happens through the Covenant.⁸¹

Sub-section 4 of Section 1 of Part 1 of Main Discussion – 3:21-30

3:21 However, now, independently of the Covenant, the justification of God has been manifested, to which the Law and the Prophets bear witness.⁸² 3:22 This is the justification from God to all those who believe—in view of their belief in Jesus the Messiah,⁸³ for there is no distinction.⁸⁴ 3:23 For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,⁸⁵ 3:24 so that they are justified as a gift by means of His grace in the light of the redemption by means of the Messiah Jesus.⁸⁶ 3:25 God purposed that he be a propitiatory offering with a view to belief in his blood. This was in order to indicate His justification on account of His overlooking our formerly committed sins⁸⁷ 3:26 by means of God's restraint. This was for the demonstration of His justification, so that He may be both righteous and the justifier of the one who is justified by virtue of belief in Jesus.⁸⁸

3:27 Therefore, where is there any boasting? It has been excluded. Through what kind of teaching? Of works [of the Covenant]? No. Rather of belief.⁸⁹ 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by belief independently of works of the Covenant.⁹⁰ 3:29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not also the God of Gentiles?⁹¹ Yes, He is the God of Gentiles also, 3:30 if it is true that He is one. He will justify the circumcision by virtue of their belief and the uncircumcision in the light of their belief.⁹²

Section 2 of Part 1 of Main Discussion – 3:31-4:25

3:31 Are we consequently invalidating the Covenant through our promotion of belief? Not at all! Rather we are supporting the Covenant.⁹³ 4:1 For example, what shall we say that Abraham, our forefather by physical descent, has found?⁹⁴ 4:2 For if Abraham was justified by virtue of his works, then he has something to brag about. However, it turns out that he has nothing to brag about before God.⁹⁵ 4:3 Instead, what does the scripture say,

And Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him as justification <Genesis 15:6>?⁹⁶

4:4 To him who performs deeds, his payment is not accounted to him according to grace, but according to what is owed.⁹⁷ 4:5 However, to him who does not perform deeds but, instead, *believes* in Him who justifies the ungodly person, his belief is accounted to him as justification.⁹⁸

4:6 This is also in exact accord with what David says of the blessing of the man to whom God accounts justification apart from works,⁹⁹

4:7 Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
And whose evil actions are put out of sight.

4:8 Blessed is the man whose sin Yahweh does not take into account <Psalm 32:1,2>.¹⁰⁰

4:9 Therefore, was this blessing for the condition of circumcision or uncircumcision? Well, we are saying, "Belief was accounted to Abraham as justification."¹⁰¹ 4:10 Therefore, in what condition was it accounted—while he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision but in uncircumcision.¹⁰² 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision as that which confirmed the justification of belief which was in his uncircumcision, in order that he may

be the father of all who believe in the midst of uncircumcision, so that justification may also be accounted to them,¹⁰³ **4:12** and the father of circumcision for those not only who are by virtue of circumcision but also who follow in the footsteps of belief in the uncircumcision of our father Abraham.¹⁰⁴

4:13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be the heir of the world was not with a view to the Covenant but with a view to justification of belief.¹⁰⁵ **4:14** For if those who are of the Covenant are heirs, then belief has become irrelevant and the promise has been nullified.¹⁰⁶

4:15 In addition, the Covenant produces wrath.¹⁰⁷ But where there is no Covenant, neither is there transgression.¹⁰⁸ **4:16** Therefore, it is by virtue of belief in order that it may be on the basis of grace, so that the promise may be guaranteed to every one of the descendants, not to the one who is such by virtue of the Covenant only, but also to the one who is such by virtue of Abraham-like belief, who is the father of us all,¹⁰⁹ **4:17** just as it has been written,

I have established you as the father of many peoples <Genesis 17:5>.¹¹⁰

In the presence of Him whom he believed, that is God, who gives life to the dead and who calls into existence the things that do not exist,¹¹¹ **4:18** he, against hope, on the basis of hope, believed that he would become “the father of many peoples” in line with what had been said,

Thus shall your descendants be <Genesis 15:5>.¹¹²

4:19 And without weakening in his belief, he took notice of his own body, which had already died because he was about 100 years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb.¹¹³ **4:20** Yet, he did not doubt the promise of God with unbelief. Instead, he was strengthened in belief while giving glory to God.¹¹⁴ **4:21** And being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also powerful enough to do, **4:22** it was therefore accounted to him as justification.¹¹⁵

4:23 Now, that it was accounted to him was not written with only him in view,¹¹⁶ **4:24** but also with us in view, to whom it would eventually be accounted, who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,¹¹⁷ **4:25** who was delivered up for our transgressions and was raised for our justification.¹¹⁸

Section 3 of Part 1 of Main Discussion – 5:1-11

5:1 Therefore, having been justified by belief, we have a peaceful relationship with God through our Lord Jesus the Messiah,¹¹⁹ **5:2** because of whom through belief we have also received the right to enter into this grace in which we have come to stand.¹²⁰ And we boast in waiting confidently for the glory of God.¹²¹ **5:3** Not only this, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces perseverance,¹²² **5:4** and perseverance produces clear evidence, and clear evidence produces waiting confidently.¹²³ **5:5** And waiting confidently will not result in being ashamed, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts in the manner of the Holy Spirit who was given to us.¹²⁴

5:6 In addition, while we were still weak, at that very moment the Messiah died for the ungodly.¹²⁵ **5:7** Someone will hardly die for a righteous man. Though, perhaps for a good man someone may indeed have the courage to die.¹²⁶ **5:8** However, God demonstrates His own love towards us in that while we were nevertheless sinners, the Messiah died for us.¹²⁷ **5:9** Therefore, having now been justified by means of his blood, much more certainly we shall be saved from the wrath through him.¹²⁸ **5:10** For, if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more certainly, having been reconciled, we shall be saved into his life.¹²⁹

5:11 And not only this, but we also boast in God in view of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, by means of whom we have now received reconciliation.¹³⁰

Section 4 of Part 1 of Main Discussion – 5:12-21

5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death entered through sin, and thus death spread to all men, in regard to which all sinned...¹³¹

5:13 It turns out that, before the Covenant came along, sin was in the world, even though sin is definitely not “charged to one’s account” where there is no Covenant.¹³² **5:14** Nevertheless, death ruled the day from Adam until Moses, even over those who did not sin like Adam’s deviating from the moral standard, who is the prototype of what was to come.¹³³)

5:15 However, the gracious gift is not like the transgression. For if many died because of the transgression of the one man, much more certainly did the grace of God and the free gift by means of the grace of the one man, Jesus the Messiah, prove to be abundant with respect to many.¹³⁴

5:16 In addition, the free gift is not like that which happened through the one who sinned. On the one hand, there is judgment by virtue of one transgression that leads to condemnation. On the other hand, there is the gracious gift that arises out of many transgressions that would lead to a just penalty.¹³⁵ **5:17** Thus, if death ruled the day because of one man, because of the transgression of the one man, much more certainly those who receive grace and the free gift of justification that are in excess of the expected amount shall rule in life because of the one man, Jesus the Messiah.¹³⁶

5:18 Therefore, just as because of one transgression there resulted condemnation for all men, thus, also, in connection with one just penalty there is justification leading to life for all men.¹³⁷ **5:19** For just as through the disobedience of one man, the many were made to be sinners, thus also through the obedience of one man, the many will be made to be justified.¹³⁸

5:20 And the Covenant came in with the express purpose that sin increase. However, where sin increased, grace was present even more abundantly,¹³⁹ **5:21** so that, just as sin ruled the day by means of death, thus also grace would rule through justification for the purpose of eternal life through Jesus the Messiah, our Lord.¹⁴⁰

Part 2 of Main Discussion – 6:1-11:36

Section 1 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 6:1-8:39

Sub-section 1 of Section 1 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 6:1-14

6:1 Therefore, what shall we say, “Let us continue to do evil in order that grace will increase?”¹⁴¹ **6:2** Absolutely not! We who died to sin—how shall we still live in it?¹⁴² **6:3** Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into the Messiah Jesus were baptized into his death?¹⁴³ **6:4** Therefore, through our baptism into his death, we were buried with him, so that, just as the Messiah was raised from the dead in view of the glory of the Father, thus also we may walk in the newness of life.¹⁴⁴ **6:5** If we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, then we shall also certainly be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection,¹⁴⁵ **6:6** because we understand this—that our old self was crucified with him, so that our body of sin could be nullified, so that we are no longer enslaved to sin.¹⁴⁶ **6:7** For he who died has been justified from sin.¹⁴⁷

6:8 If we died with the Messiah, we believe that we shall also live with him,¹⁴⁸ **6:9** because we know that the Messiah, because he has been raised from the dead, no longer encounters death. Death no longer dominates him,¹⁴⁹ **6:10** because the death that he died, he died with respect to sin once and never again. And the life that he lives, he lives for God.¹⁵⁰ **6:11** In a similar manner, count yourselves on the one hand to be dead to sin, and on the other hand living for God in the Messiah Jesus.¹⁵¹

6:12 Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its immoral desires.¹⁵² **6:13** And do not go on presenting your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. Instead, present yourselves to God as living from the dead and your members

to God as instruments of morality,¹⁵³ 6:14 because sin will not dominate you. For you are not under the Covenant but under grace.¹⁵⁴

Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 6:15-8:39

Sub-sub-section 1 of Sub-section 2 of Section 1 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 6:15-23

6:15 What does this mean? Shall we sin because we are not under the Covenant but under grace? Absolutely not!¹⁵⁵ 6:16 Do you not know that to whomever you keep on presenting yourselves as slaves in order to obey him, you are slaves toward whom you keep on obeying? You are either a slave of sin that leads you to death, or of obedience that leads you to righteousness.¹⁵⁶

6:17 Now thanks be to God that you were slaves of sin, but you obeyed from the heart the content of the teaching to which you were entrusted.¹⁵⁷ 6:18 And having been freed from sin, you were enslaved to righteousness.¹⁵⁸ 6:19 I am speaking in terms of human experience on account of the moral weakness of your humanity—for just as you presented your members as slaves to moral filth and to lawlessness for the purpose of lawlessness, so now, correspondingly, present your members as slaves to righteousness for the purpose of holiness.¹⁵⁹

6:20 When you were slaves of sin, you were free with respect to righteousness.¹⁶⁰ 6:21 Therefore, what benefit were you deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed, because the end result of those things is death?¹⁶¹ 6:22 However, now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your benefit for the purpose of being holy, and the end result is eternal life.¹⁶² 6:23 The wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in the Messiah Jesus our Lord.¹⁶³

Sub-sub-section 2 of Sub-section 2 of Section 1 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 7:1-6

7:1 Or do you not know, brothers, for I am speaking to those who are familiar with the Covenant, that the Covenant has jurisdiction over a man as long as he is alive.¹⁶⁴ 7:2 For example, a married woman has been bound by the Covenant to her living husband. But if her husband dies, she is released from the husband commandment.¹⁶⁵ 7:3 Therefore, while her husband is alive, she shall be called an adulteress if she marries another man. However, if her husband dies, she is free from the husband commandment, so that she is not an adulteress when she marries another man.¹⁶⁶

7:4 Similarly, my brothers, you also were made to “die” by the Covenant in view of the body of the Messiah, so that you may “marry another man,” him who was raised from the dead, so that we may bear fruit for God.¹⁶⁷ 7:5 When we were in the fleshly natural-born sinfulness of our humanity, the sinful passions that existed in the midst of the Covenant were themselves working in our members, so that we bore fruit that would mean death.¹⁶⁸ 7:6 But, now, we have been released from the Covenant, because we died in the midst of that by which we were being held fast, so that we serve as slaves in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.¹⁶⁹

Sub-sub-section 3 of Sub-section 2 of Section 1 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 7:7-12

7:7 Therefore, what shall we say? Is the Covenant sin? Absolutely not! Instead, I did not really understand my sin except through the Covenant, because I did not understand my sinful desires except the Covenant was saying,

You shall not desire something rebelliously <Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21>.¹⁷⁰

7:8 And sin, taking the opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of rebellious desires.

Apart from the Covenant, sin is dead.¹⁷¹ 7:9 And I was formerly “alive” apart from the Covenant. But when the commandment hit home, sin sprang to life,¹⁷² 7:10 and I died. Thus, this

commandment, whose purpose was for life, turned out for me to be for the purpose of death.¹⁷³
7:11 For sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and then, in view of it, killed me.¹⁷⁴ **7:12** Therefore, the Covenant is holy, and the commandment is holy and moral and good.¹⁷⁵

Sub-sub-section 4 of Sub-section 2 of Section 1 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 7:13-23

7:13 Along this same line, did that which is good become death for me? Absolutely not! Instead, it was sin, so that sin could be brought to light by producing death for me through that which is good, so that sin could become sinful to the utmost degree through the commandment.¹⁷⁶

7:14 For we know that the Covenant is spiritual, but I am of fleshly natural-born humanity, having been sold into slavery to sin.¹⁷⁷ **7:15** Thus, on the one hand, I do not understand what I am doing, because I am not practicing what I want, but I am doing the very thing I hate.¹⁷⁸ **7:16** But if I am doing this very thing I do not want, I am agreeing with the Covenant, that it is good.¹⁷⁹

7:17 Nevertheless, no longer am “I” the one doing what I am doing, but it is sin which dwells in me.¹⁸⁰ **7:18** Thus, I recognize that goodness does not dwell within me, that is in my natural-born humanity, for the desiring is present in me, but the doing of good is not.¹⁸¹ **7:19** Instead, I am not doing good, which I want, but I am practicing evil, the very thing I do not want.¹⁸² **7:20** But if I am doing this very thing which I do not want, no longer am “I” the one doing it, but it is sin that indwells me.¹⁸³

7:21 In this way, I discover the principle in me who wants to do good—that evil is present within me.¹⁸⁴ **7:22** For I joyfully concur with the Covenant of God in my inner man,¹⁸⁵ **7:23** but I see another set of instructions in my members, which is warring against the instructions in my mind and making me a prisoner of the instructions of sin that are in my members.¹⁸⁶

Sub-sub-section 5 of Sub-section 2 of Section 1 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 7:24-8:11

7:24 I am one miserable person! Who will rescue me from this deadly body?¹⁸⁷ **7:25** Thanks be to God in the light of Jesus the Messiah our Lord! Therefore, as a result, on the one hand, with my mind I am serving the instruction of God, but, on the other hand, with my natural-born humanity the instruction of sin.¹⁸⁸

8:1 The result is that there is now no sentence of death for those who are in the Messiah Jesus,¹⁸⁹ **8:2** because the instruction of the Spirit, which results in life, has set you free in the Messiah Jesus from the instruction of sin and its result—death.¹⁹⁰ **8:3** What was impossible for Covenant to do, because it was too weak in view of our natural-born humanity, God did, while sending His own Son in the likeness of a sinful human being and concerning sin. He then exacted the penalty of sin on his humanity,¹⁹¹ **8:4** in order that the just requirement of the Covenant may be fulfilled for us, who do not live according to our natural-born humanity but according to the Spirit.¹⁹²

8:5 Indeed, those who are defined by their natural-born humanity are inwardly inclined toward the things of their natural-born humanity, and those who are defined by the Spirit are inwardly inclined toward the things of the Spirit.¹⁹³ **8:6** In addition, the intentions of the natural-born humanity are death-like, but the intentions of the Spirit are life-like and shalom-like,¹⁹⁴ **8:7** because the intentions of the natural-born humanity are hostile towards God, for they do not submit themselves to the instruction of God, because they are indeed incapable of doing so.¹⁹⁵ **8:8** Thus, those who are defined by their natural-born humanity are completely incapable of pleasing God.¹⁹⁶

8:9 However, you are not defined by your natural-born humanity but by the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Nevertheless, if someone does not have the spirit of the Messiah, he is not of Him.¹⁹⁷ **8:10** But if the Messiah is in you, on the one hand your body is dead on account of sin, and on the other hand your spirit means life on account of justification.¹⁹⁸ **8:11** Indeed, if the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised the Messiah

from the dead will through His Spirit who indwells you also make alive your bodies which are subject to death.¹⁹⁹

Sub-sub-section 6 of Sub-section 2 of Section 1 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 8:12-14

8:12 Therefore then, brethren, we are not obligated to our natural-born humanity to live according to it.²⁰⁰ **8:13** If you are living according to your natural-born humanity, you are headed towards death. But if, by the Spirit, you are putting to death the actions that arise out of your physical existence, you will get yourself life.²⁰¹ **8:14** For as many as are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.²⁰²

Sub-sub-section 7 of Sub-section 2 of Section 1 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 8:15-27

8:15 You did not receive the inward characteristics of slavery again with the result of your being afraid, but you received the inward characteristics of adoption, by which we continuously cry out, “Father, Father.”²⁰³ **8:16** The Spirit himself confirms with our spirit that we are children of God.²⁰⁴ **8:17** And if we are children, then we are heirs also—on the one hand heirs of God, and on the other hand fellow-heirs with the Messiah—if indeed we sympathetically suffer with him in order that we also be glorified with him.²⁰⁵ **8:18** For I regard it to be true that the sympathetic sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared to the future glory that will be revealed to us.²⁰⁶

8:19 Thus, the eager longing of the creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God.²⁰⁷ **8:20** The creation was forced to be subject to futility—not voluntarily, but on account of Him who forced it to be subject—on the basis of hope,²⁰⁸ **8:21** because the creation itself will also be set free from its slavery to decay into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.²⁰⁹ **8:22** Indeed, we know that the whole creation groans with them and suffers with them the pains of childbirth together until now.²¹⁰

8:23 And not only this, but we also, because we have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, while we eagerly await our adoption, being released from our body.²¹¹ **8:24** We were saved on the basis of hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who waits expectantly for what he sees?²¹² **8:25** However, if we hope for what we do not see, we are eagerly awaiting it with patient endurance.²¹³

8:26 And likewise, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, for we do not know what is necessary to pray, but the Spirit Himself pleads for us in the manner of our wordless groanings.²¹⁴ **8:27** And He who carefully examines the hearts knows what is the intent of the Spirit—that He pleads on behalf of those who are holy in accordance with God.²¹⁵

Sub-sub-section 8 of Sub-section 2 of Section 1 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 8:28-30

8:28 Thus, we know for those who love God that everything works together for their good, for those who have been called according to His plan,²¹⁶ **8:29** because the ones whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren.²¹⁷ **8:30** And the ones whom He predestined, these He also calls, and the ones whom He calls, these He also justifies, and the ones whom He justifies, these He also glorifies.²¹⁸

Sub-sub-section 9 of Sub-section 2 of Section 1 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 8:31-39

8:31 What, therefore, shall we say to these things? If God is for us, then who can be against us?²¹⁹ **8:32** He who did not spare His own Son but gave him up for us all, how will He not along with him also grace us all things?²²⁰ **8:33** Who will bring a charge against the ones whom God chose? God is the one who forgives.²²¹ **8:34** Who is the one who condemns? The Messiah Jesus is he who died and who, even more, was raised, who also is at the right hand of God, who also appeals to God on our behalf.²²²

8:35 What will separate us from the love of the Messiah? Will affliction, or anguish, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or sword²²³—**8:36** just as it has been written,

Because of you we are being put to death all day long.
We are considered as sheep for slaughter <Psalm 44:22>?²²⁴

8:37 However, in all these things we are overwhelmingly victorious in view of him who loved us.²²⁵ **8:38** Consequently, I have become convinced that neither death, nor life, nor messengers, nor rulers, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers,²²⁶ **8:39** nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in the Messiah Jesus our Lord.²²⁷

Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 9:1-11:36

Sub-section 1 of Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 9:1-5

9:1 I am telling the truth in the Messiah. I am not lying, while my understanding bears witness with me by means of the Holy Spirit,²²⁸ **9:2** that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart,²²⁹ **9:3** because I wish that I myself were assigned to destruction away from the Messiah on behalf of my brothers, my fellow-countrymen according to the flesh,²³⁰ **9:4** who are Israelites, to whom belong the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of Torah, the worship, and the promises,²³¹ **9:5** whose are the fathers and from whom is the Messiah (that which is according to the flesh), the one who is over all things. May God be blessed into the ages! Amen!²³²

Sub-section 2 of Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 9:6-13

9:6 But by no means has the message of God failed, because, all those who are from Israel, these are not Israel.²³³ **9:7** Nor is it that all children are the “seed” of Abraham, but

in Isaac will your seed be named <Genesis 21:12>.²³⁴

9:8 That is, the children of the flesh, these are not children of God. But the children of the promise are considered as “seed.”²³⁵ **9:9** For this is the message of the promise,

At this time I will come, and Sarah will have a son <Genesis 18:10,14>.²³⁶

9:10 And not only this, but Rebekah also, after she had sexual relations with one man, Isaac our father²³⁷—**9:11** for even though they were neither born yet nor had done anything good or bad, in order that God’s purpose according to choice would continue,²³⁸ **9:12** not on the basis of actions but on the basis of Him who calls, it was said to her,

The older will serve the younger <Genesis 25:23>,²³⁹

9:13 just as it has been written,

I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau <Malachi 1:2,3>.²⁴⁰

Sub-section 3 of Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 9:14-18

9:14 What, therefore, shall we say? There is no injustice with God, is there? Absolutely not!²⁴¹ **9:15** For He says to Moses,

I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion <Exodus 33:19>.²⁴²

9:16 Therefore then, it does not belong to the one who wills, nor to the one who exerts himself, but it belongs to God who performs mercy.²⁴³ 9:17 For the scripture says to Pharaoh,

For this reason I raised you up, so that I could demonstrate My power by means of you and so that My name could be proclaimed in all the earth <Exodus 9:16>.²⁴⁴

9:18 Therefore then, He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.²⁴⁵

Sub-section 4 of Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 9:19-29

9:19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still blame people for their evil, for who has ever resisted His will?”²⁴⁶ 9:20 On the contrary O man, who you are, the one who is defending himself against God? The thing which is molded will not say to the molder,

“Why did you make me like this,” will it <Isaiah 29:16>?²⁴⁷

9:21 Does not the potter of the clay have the right to make from the same lump one clay pot for honor and another clay pot for dishonor?²⁴⁸

9:22 If God, while desiring to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, has endured with great patience clay pots of wrath which were made for a destiny of destruction,²⁴⁹

9:23 then He has done so in order that He make known the riches of His glory on clay pots of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for a destiny of glory²⁵⁰—9:24 even us whom He called, not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles.²⁵¹ 9:25 This is similar to what He says in Hosea,

I shall call those who are not My people “My people” and her who is not beloved “beloved,”²⁵² 9:26 and it shall be in the place where it was said to them, “You are not My people,” there they shall be designated “sons of the living God” <Hosea 2:23; 1:10>.²⁵³

9:27 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel,

Even though the number of the sons of Israel will be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved,²⁵⁴ 9:28 for soon Yahweh will execute His determined plan completely on the land <Isaiah 10:22,23>.²⁵⁵

9:29 And just as Isaiah foretold,

Unless Yahweh of battalions had left behind a ‘seed’ for us, we would have become as Sodom and we would be like Gomorrah <Isaiah 1:9>.²⁵⁶

Sub-section 5 of Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 9:30-10:3

9:30 Therefore, what shall we say? That the Gentiles, who were not looking for justification, laid hold of justification, and this is the justification which is by virtue of belief.²⁵⁷ 9:31 But Israel, while striving after the Covenant of justification, did not arrive the Covenant.²⁵⁸ 9:32 Why not? Because they did not pursue justification by belief but as though they could obtain it by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,²⁵⁹ 9:33 just as it was written,

Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and an offensive rock, and he who believes in it will not become ashamed <Isaiah 8:14; 28:16>.²⁶⁰

10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and my appeal to God on their behalf is for their salvation.²⁶¹
10:2 I attest that they have a zeal for God, but it is not according to a proper understanding.²⁶²
10:3 Because they do not really grasp God's justification and seek to establish their own justification, they do not submit to God's justification.²⁶³

Sub-section 6 of Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 10:4-13

10:4 For the goal of the Covenant is the Messiah with the result of justification to everyone who believes.²⁶⁴ **10:5** For Moses writes concerning justification that is by virtue of the Mosaic Covenant,

The man who practices the things shall live by means of them <Leviticus 18:5>.²⁶⁵

10:6 And justification by virtue of belief speaks in this manner,

Do not say in your heart <Deuteronomy 9:4>, “Who will ascend into heaven <Deuteronomy 30:12>?”

This is to bring the Messiah down.²⁶⁶ **10:7** Or,

“Who will descend into the abyss <similar to Deuteronomy 30:13>?”

This is to bring the Messiah up from the dead.²⁶⁷ **10:8** Rather, what does it say?

The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart <Deuteronomy 30:14>.

This is the message of belief, which we are proclaiming,²⁶⁸ **10:9** because, if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.²⁶⁹ **10:10** With the heart a person believes with the result of justification, and with the mouth he confesses with the result of salvation.²⁷⁰ **10:11** For the scripture says,

Everyone who believes in it will not become ashamed <Isaiah 28:16>.²⁷¹

10:12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same person is Lord of all, because He is rich towards all who call upon Him.²⁷²

10:13 For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved <Joel 2:32>.²⁷³

Sub-section 7 of Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 10:14-21

10:14 Therefore, how may they call on Him whom they did not believe? And how may they believe what they have not heard? And how may they hear apart from someone's making proclamation?²⁷⁴ **10:15** And how may they proclaim unless they are sent, just as it was written,

How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim good news of good things <paraphrase of Isaiah 52:7>!²⁷⁵

10:16 However, not everyone obeyed the good news. For Isaiah says,

Lord, who believed our message <Isaiah 53:1>?²⁷⁶

10:17 Therefore, belief is from hearing, and hearing is through the message of the Messiah.²⁷⁷

10:18 Nevertheless, I say, they did not hear, did they? On the contrary,

Their voice has gone out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the inhabited world
<Psalm 19:4>.²⁷⁸

10:19 But I say, Israel did not know, did they? First, Moses says,

I will annoy you terribly by that which is not a nation. I will make you angry by a nation who do not understand <Deuteronomy 32:31>.²⁷⁹

10:20 And Isaiah is bold and says,

I was found by those who were not seeking me, and I became manifest to those who were not inquiring after me <Isaiah 65:1>.²⁸⁰

10:21 Yet, to Israel He says,

All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people <Isaiah 65:2>.²⁸¹

Sub-section 8 of Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 11:1-6

11:1 What I am asking is this—God has not rejected His people, has He? Absolutely not! For, indeed, I am an Israelite, from the “seed” of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.²⁸²

11:2 God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew <Psalm 94:14>.

Or do you not know what the scriptures say about Elijah as he pleads with God against Israel,²⁸³

11:3 Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life <1 Kings 19:10,14>.²⁸⁴

11:4 Yet, what is the divine response to him?

I have kept for Myself 7,000 men who have not bowed their knee to Baal <1 Kings 19:18>.²⁸⁵

11:5 In the same manner, therefore, at the present time, there exists a remnant according to His gracious choice.²⁸⁶ **11:6** And if it is by means of grace, it is not by virtue of works. Otherwise, grace is not grace.²⁸⁷

Sub-section 9 of Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 11:6-10

11:7 What then? That which Israel is seeking, they did not obtain this. However, the chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened,²⁸⁸ **11:8** just as it is written,

God gave them a dull spirit <Isaiah 29:10>, eyes to see not and ears to hear not down to this very day <Deuteronomy 29:4>.²⁸⁹

11:9 Even David says,

Let their table become a snare, a trap, a stumbling block, and a just recompense to them.²⁹⁰

11:10 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see, and may their backs bend through everything <Psalm 69:22,23>.²⁹¹

Sub-section 10 of Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 11:11-24

11:11 In addition, I am asking this—they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? Absolutely not! But, through their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles in order to annoy them terribly.²⁹² **11:12** And if their transgression be wealth for the world and their failure be wealth for the Gentiles, how much more will their fullness be!²⁹³

11:13 Thus, I say to you, Gentiles, as far as I am certainly the apostle to the Gentiles, I am glorifying my ministry,²⁹⁴ **11:14** if somehow I annoy terribly my kinsmen and save some of them.²⁹⁵ **11:15** If their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from those who are dead.²⁹⁶ **11:16** And if the first portion is holy, the lump is also. And if the root is holy, the branches are too.²⁹⁷

11:17 If some of the branches were broken off, and you, being from a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them such that you became a partaker with them in the rich root of the olive tree,²⁹⁸ **11:18** do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are arrogant, you do not support the root, but the root supports you.²⁹⁹ **11:19** Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.”³⁰⁰ **11:20** That’s right. They were broken off because of their unbelief, and you stand because of your belief. Do not be arrogant, but fear,³⁰¹ **11:21** because, if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.³⁰²

11:22 Behold the kindness and severity of God. To those who fell, severity. But to you, God’s kindness, if you remain in His kindness. Otherwise, you will be cut off.³⁰³ **11:23** And these others, if they do not continue in unbelief, they will be grafted in, because God is powerful enough to graft them in anew.³⁰⁴ **11:24** If you were cut off from what according to nature is a wild olive tree and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more certainly will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?³⁰⁵

Sub-section 11 of Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 11:25-32

11:25 Brothers, so that you are not trusting in your own wisdom, I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, that a partial hardening has occurred to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.³⁰⁶ **11:26** And without further ado all Israel will be saved just as it is written,

The One who delivers will come out of Zion; He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob
<Isaiah 59:20>,³⁰⁷ **11:27** and this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins” <Isaiah 59:21; Isaiah 27:9; Jeremiah 31:33-34>.³⁰⁸

11:28 On the one hand, they are enemies with respect to the good news on your account. On the other hand, they are beloved with respect to the choice on account of the fathers,³⁰⁹ **11:29** because the gracious gifts and calling of God are unchangeable.³¹⁰ **11:30** Just as you formerly were disobedient to God and now have been granted mercy because of these ones’ disobedience,³¹¹ **11:31** so also these are now disobedient for your being granted mercy, so that they may be granted mercy.³¹² **11:32** God has enclosed all in disobedience, in order that He may show mercy to all.³¹³

Sub-section 12 of Section 2 of Part 2 of Main Discussion – 11:33-36

11:33 O the depth of the riches of both the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unfathomable are His decrees and incomprehensible are His ways.³¹⁴

11:34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has become His counselor <Isaiah 40:13>?³¹⁵

11:35 Or who has first given to Him that it should be paid back to him <Job 35:7; 41:11>?³¹⁶

11:36 For from Him, for the sake of Him, and for the purpose of Him are all things. To Him be the glory into the ages. Amen.³¹⁷

Second Discussion – 12:1-15:13

Part 1 of Second Discussion – 12:1-13:14

Section 1 of Part 1 of Second Discussion – 12:1

12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brethren, in the light of God's mercies, to present your bodies to God as a living, set apart, and pleasing sacrificial thank-offering—this being your genuine "ritual."³¹⁸

Section 2 (a parenthesis) of Part 1 of Second Discussion – 12:2-8

12:2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you regard as worth paying attention to what the will of God is—that which is good and pleasing and will attain the intended outcome.³¹⁹ **12:3** In the light of the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think, but to think of yourself so that you have an accurate grasp of reality, with a view to the fact that God has apportioned to each one a measure of His token as a guarantee.³²⁰

12:4 Just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,³²¹ **12:5** so also we, the many, are one body in the Messiah and individually members of one another.³²² **12:6** As a result, we have different gifts according to the grace which was given to us. If the gift is prophecy, then it is according to the proportion of His token as a guarantee.³²³ **12:7** If it is service, then in it is in the very acts of serving. If it is as one who teaches, then it is in the very acts of teaching.³²⁴ **12:8** If it is exhortation, then it is in the very acts of exhortation. He who gives should do so with generosity. He who cares for others should do so with eagerness. He who shows mercy should do so with cheerfulness.³²⁵ **12:9** Our love is to be unhyphocritical.³²⁶

Section 3 of Part 1 of Second Discussion – 12:9-21

Abhor what is evil. Be glued to what is good.³²⁷ **12:10** Be tenderly loving towards one another with brotherly love. Lead one another in being respectful.³²⁸ **12:11** Do not be lacking in diligence while seething in reference to your spirit as you serve the Lord.³²⁹ **12:12** Rejoice in the midst of hope. Endure in the midst of stress. Stand ready in the midst of prayer.³³⁰ **12:13** Share in the needs of the ones who are set apart. Pursue loving strangers.³³¹ **12:14** Speak well of and want the best for those who persecute you. Speak well of and want the best for them and do not curse them.³³² **12:15** Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep.³³³ **12:16** Consider one another as equals. Do not set your mind on lofty people, but be carried away by humble people. Do not be wise in your own estimation.³³⁴

12:17 Pay back evil for evil to no one. Have regard for what is good before all men.³³⁵ **12:18** If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be at peace with all men.³³⁶ **12:19** Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for the wrath, because it is written,

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay," says the Lord <Deuteronomy 32:35>.³³⁷

12:20 But if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by doing so you will heap burning coals of fire on his head <Proverbs 25:21,22>.³³⁸

12:21 Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.³³⁹

Section 4 of Part 1 of Second Discussion – 13:1-7

13:1 Let everyone obey the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which has been put there by God. And those which exist have been established by God,³⁴⁰ **13:2** so that he who opposes the authority has opposed God's directive. And those who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.³⁴¹

13:3 For rulers are not intended to be a cause of fear with respect to good behavior but instead with respect to evil behavior. However, do you want there to be no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same authority.³⁴² **13:4** For it is a servant of God for you for the purpose of encouraging good behavior. Therefore, if you do evil, be afraid because it does not carry the sword for nothing. Indeed, it is a servant of God, an avenger for the purpose of wrath on the one who practices evil.³⁴³

13:5 Therefore, it is necessary to obey it, not only on account of wrath, but also on account of what we know we should do.³⁴⁴ **13:6** For on account of this you pay taxes, for they are servants of God who are continually devoted to this very thing.³⁴⁵ **13:7** Render to all the things that you owe them—tax to whom you owe tax, custom to whom you owe custom, fear to whom you owe fear, honor to whom you owe honor.³⁴⁶

Section 5 of Part 1 of Second Discussion – 13:8-10

13:8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another, for he who loves has fulfilled the Covenant,³⁴⁷ **13:9** because

You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet <Exodus 20:13,14,15,17>.

And if there is any other commandment, it is summed up by this statement,

You shall love your neighbor as yourself <Leviticus 19:18>.³⁴⁸

13:10 Love does no evil towards one's neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the Covenant.³⁴⁹

Section 6 of Part 1 of Second Discussion – 13:11-14

13:11 And do this, knowing the season, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we believed [it was].³⁵⁰ **13:12** The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the works of darkness, and let us put on the weapons of light.³⁵¹ **13:13** Let us behave properly as in the day—not with carousing and drunkenness, not with sexual promiscuity and sensual abandonment, and not with strife and envy.³⁵² **13:14** But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no plans for the flesh in regard to its evil passions.³⁵³

Part 2 of Second Discussion – 14:1-15:13

Section 1 of Part 2 of Second Discussion – 14:1-4

14:1 Accept the one who has a faulty belief system, but not for the purpose of arguing about personal views.³⁵⁴ **14:2** One person believes he can eat all things. Another person, who has a faulty belief system, eats only vegetables.³⁵⁵ **14:3** Let him who eats not treat with contempt him who does not eat, and let him who does not eat not condemn him who eats, for God has accepted him.³⁵⁶

14:4 As for you, who are you who condemns the servant who belongs to another? For his own master he stands or falls, and he will be made to stand, because the Lord is strong enough to make him stand.³⁵⁷

Section 2 of Part 2 of Second Discussion – 14:5-11

14:5 One person considers one day as more important than another. Another person considers every day alike. Each is allowed to be fully convinced in his own mind.³⁵⁸ **14:6** He who regards the day regards it for the Lord, and he who eats eats for the Lord, because he gives thanks to God. He who does not eat does not eat for the Lord, and he also gives thanks to

God.³⁵⁹ **14:7** Not one of us lives for himself and not one of us dies for himself.³⁶⁰ **14:8** If we live, we “live” for the Lord, and if we die, we “die” for the Lord. Therefore, whether we “live” or “die,” we belong to the Lord.³⁶¹ **14:9** It was for this reason that the Messiah died and lived, so that He could be the master of those who die and those who live.³⁶²

14:10 As for you, why do you condemn your brother, or why do you treat your brother with contempt? We shall all *stand* at the judgment seat of God,³⁶³ **14:11** because it was written,

“As I live,” says the Lord, “every knee will bow and every tongue will acknowledge God
<Isaiah 45:23>.”³⁶⁴

Section 3 of Part 2 of Second Discussion – 14:12-15:3

14:12 Each one of us will give an account of himself to God.³⁶⁵ **14:13** Therefore, let us no longer condemn one another but instead determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.³⁶⁶

14:14 I know and have become convinced by means of the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in and of itself. But to him who considers something to be unclean, it is unclean to him.³⁶⁷ **14:15** For example, if your brother is caused emotional distress by food, you are no longer walking according to the principle of love. Do not destroy with your food the emotional well-being of him for whom the Messiah died.³⁶⁸ **14:16** In the same way, do not allow what is good for you to be spoken of as evil,³⁶⁹ **14:17** because the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness, shalom, and joy by means of the Holy Spirit.³⁷⁰ **14:18** Thus, he who serves the Messiah in this way is pleasing to God and worthy of being approved by men.³⁷¹

14:19 Consequently, let us pursue doing things associated with God’s eternal shalom and the building up of one another.³⁷² **14:20** Do not destroy the work of God on account of food. On the one hand, everything is clean, but, on the other hand, something becomes evil for the man who eats while being a stone over which someone trips.³⁷³ **14:21** It is good not to eat meat, not to drink wine, and not to do anything by which your brother is offended.³⁷⁴

14:22 As for you, hold on before God to the belief system which is truly yours. Happy is the one who does not condemn himself in what he finds acceptable.³⁷⁵ **14:23** But he who doubts if he were to eat is “condemned,” because it is not part of his belief system, and anything that is not part of his belief system is immoral.³⁷⁶

15:1 And we, the strong ones, are obligated to bear with the weaknesses of the weak ones and not just please ourselves.³⁷⁷ **15:2** Let each of us please his neighbor for the purpose of bringing about what is good, for the edification of his neighbor.³⁷⁸ **15:3** Certainly, the Messiah did not please himself, but just as it was written,

The reproaches of those who reproach You fell upon me <Psalm 69:9>.³⁷⁹

Section 4 of Part 2 of Second Discussion – 15:4-13

15:4 Whatever was written beforehand was written for our instruction, so that, through perseverance and the persuasion of the scriptures, we may have hope.³⁸⁰ **15:5** May the God of perseverance and persuasion give to you the same perspective as one another according to the Messiah Jesus,³⁸¹ **15:6** so that, from the same impulse with one voice, you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.³⁸²

15:7 Therefore, accept one another just as the Messiah also accepted you to call attention to the awesomeness of God.³⁸³ **15:8** For I say that the Messiah has become a servant of the circumcision for the sake of the truth of God, in order that He confirm the promises that were given to the patriarchs³⁸⁴ **15:9** and so that the Gentiles may glorify God for the sake of His mercy, just as it was written,

Therefore, I shall confess You among the Gentiles and I shall sing to Your name <2
Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49>.³⁸⁵

15:10 And again it says,

Rejoice, Gentiles, with His people <Deuteronomy 32:43>.³⁸⁶

15:11 And again,

Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise Him <Psalm 117:1>.³⁸⁷

15:12 And again Isaiah says,

There shall be the root of Jesse, even he who rises to rule over the Gentiles. Because of him the Gentiles shall have hope <Isaiah 11:10>.³⁸⁸

15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in the midst of your believing, so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁸⁹

Third Discussion – 15:14-33

Part 1 of Third Discussion – 15:14-21

Section 1 of Part 1 of Third Discussion – 15:14-16

15:14 I myself am convinced concerning you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, having been filled with all knowledge and capable of admonishing one another.³⁹⁰

15:15 But I have written to you very boldly on some issues as one who is reminding you on account of the grace which was given to me by God,³⁹¹ **15:16** so that I could be a liturgical servant of the Messiah Jesus to the Gentiles, performing the sacred rites of the good news of God, in order that my offering of the Gentiles would be acceptable, having been set apart by the Holy Spirit.³⁹²

Section 2 of Part 1 of Third Discussion – 15:17-21

15:17 Therefore, I have reason to boast in the Messiah Jesus in the things pertaining to God.³⁹³ **15:18** I will not be so bold as to talk about something except what the Messiah accomplishes through me for the obedience of the Gentiles in word and deed³⁹⁴ **15:19** by means of signs and wonders, by means of the Spirit of God, so that I may fill out the good news of the Messiah from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum.³⁹⁵ **15:20** Thus, I aspired to proclaim the good news, not where the Messiah was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation,³⁹⁶ **15:21** but just as it was written,

What was not announced to them concerning him, they will see, and what they did not hear, they will understand <Isaiah 52:15>.³⁹⁷

Part 2 of Third Discussion – 15:22-29

15:22 As a result, I have indeed been impeded from coming to you.³⁹⁸ **15:23** Now, no longer having a place in these regions and having had a longing for many years to come to you³⁹⁹ **15:24** whenever I were to go to Spain, I hope as I pass through to see you and to be sent forth there by you, if I may first enjoy your company for a while.⁴⁰⁰ **15:25** However, I am going to Jerusalem to serve the set apart ones,⁴⁰¹ **15:26** because Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a certain contribution to the poor among the set apart ones in Jerusalem.⁴⁰² **15:27** They were well pleased, and they are indebted to them, because, if they contributed to the Gentiles from their spiritual things, then the Gentiles are obligated to serve them by means of material things.⁴⁰³

15:28 Subsequently, after I have completed this and sealed this fruit for them, I will go on to Spain via you.⁴⁰⁴ 15:29 Plus, I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of the Messiah.⁴⁰⁵

Part 3 of Third Discussion – 15:30-33

15:30 I exhort you, brothers, in view of our Lord Jesus the Messiah and because of the Holy Spirit, to strive with me in your prayers on my behalf to God,⁴⁰⁶ 15:31 so that I may be delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea and so that my service to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the set apart ones.⁴⁰⁷ 15:32 The result will be that when I come with joy to you by the will of God, I will be refreshed in your company.⁴⁰⁸

15:33 The God of shalom be with you all. Amen.⁴⁰⁹

Ending Discussion – 16:1-25

Part 1 of Ending Discussion – 16:1-16

16:1 I commend to you Phoebe, our sister, who is a servant of the gathering in Cenchrea,⁴¹⁰ 16:2 so that you welcome her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the set apart ones, and so that you may stand by her in whatever she needs from you. She has been a benefactor to many, including to me.⁴¹¹

16:3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in the Messiah Jesus,⁴¹² 16:4 who, for my life, risked their own necks, to whom do not only I give thanks, but also all the gatherings of the Gentiles,⁴¹³ 16:5 including that which is in their own house.

Greet Epaenetus, the one whom I love, who is the first one to convert to the Messiah in Asia.⁴¹⁴

16:6 Greet Mary, who has greatly labored for you.⁴¹⁵

16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and fellow prisoners, who are well-known among the apostles, who were indeed in the Messiah before me.⁴¹⁶

16:8 Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord.⁴¹⁷

16:9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in the Messiah, and Stachus, my beloved.⁴¹⁸

16:10 Greet Apelles, the one who has been approved in the Messiah. Greet those who are from among those of Aristobulus.⁴¹⁹

16:11 Greet Herodian, my relative. Greet those who are from among those of Narcissus, those who are in the Lord.⁴²⁰

16:12 Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, laborers in the Lord. Greet Persis, the beloved, who has labored greatly in the Lord.⁴²¹

16:13 Greet Rufus, the chosen one in the Lord, and his and my mother.⁴²²

16:14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers with them.⁴²³

16:15 Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, Olympas, and all those who are with them.⁴²⁴

16:16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the gatherings of the Messiah greet you.⁴²⁵

Part 2 of Ending Discussion – 16:17-20

16:17 I urge you, brothers, to keep an eye out for those who cause divisions and stumbling blocks contrary to the teaching which you have learned. Turn away from them,⁴²⁶ 16:18 because such men are not serving our Lord the Messiah but their own appetites. Through their smooth and flattering speech, they deceive the hearts of the innocent.⁴²⁷

16:19 The report of your obedience has reached everyone. Therefore, I rejoice over you, and I desire that you be wise with respect to what is good and innocent with respect to what is evil.⁴²⁸

16:20 The God of shalom will quickly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.⁴²⁹

16:21 Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you, along with Lucius, Jason, and Sopater, my kinsmen.⁴³⁰

Part 3 of Ending Discussion – 16:21-23

16:22 I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you because of the Lord.⁴³¹

16:23 Gaius, my host and the host of the whole gathering, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, greets you, along with Quartus, the brother.⁴³²

16:24 The grace of our Lord Jesus the Messiah be with all of you. Amen.⁴³³

Part 4 of Ending Discussion – 16:24-27

16:25 To Him who has the power to establish you according to my message of the good news and the proclamation of Jesus the Messiah, according to the revealing of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past,⁴³⁴ **16:26** but now has been manifested, even through the writings of the prophets, which, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the Gentiles for the purpose of their obedience of belief,⁴³⁵ **16:27** to the only wise God, in view of Jesus the Messiah, be the glory into the ages. Amen.⁴³⁶

¹ Παῦλος δούλος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἀφορισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ – cf. Acts 9. Paul declares that he had been specifically picked by God out of all the rest of humanity in existence at the time to be confronted by the resurrected Jesus on his way to Damascus, Syria to arrest Christians. Jesus announced to Paul that he was now one of his apostles with the unique responsibility to tell non-Jews, i.e., Gentiles, about him as the Jewish Messiah, that man who will free the Jews from their earthly enemies and restore the Kingdom of Israel and who will free both Jews and Gentiles from God's wrath and eternal condemnation so that they acquire eternal life.

Consequently, Paul understands himself to be a bondsman of his master Jesus so that he is fully resolved to follow Jesus in the responsibility that he has given him. The situation in Rome is that, for eight years since the edict of A.D. 48 by the emperor Claudius to expel all the Jews from Rome, Gentiles have become Christians but have not had to live their Christianity in the presence of Jews. However, Claudius has died, thus allowing Jews to return to the capital city, and Paul is concerned that they will pressure Gentile Christians to follow the Mosaic Covenant as the basis for their salvation from God instead of Jesus and his death and resurrection being this basis. Thus, at the outset of this letter, Paul mentions his qualifications that allow him to speak authoritatively on the subject of Christianity for both Jews and Gentiles along with Jesus' qualifications for being the Messiah. First, Paul is a committed follower of Jesus who is fulfilling his responsibility as an apostle to present to the Gentiles the beneficial message of Jesus as eternal king of the Kingdom of God and savior from God's condemnation.

And the message of Jesus is good news, the gospel, because it is by believing in Jesus and obeying him only, not the Mosaic Covenant, that any human being acquires God's eternal mercy and life.

² ὁ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἀγίαις – The information and the message about a human being who comes and fulfills the role of the Jewish Messiah are not new. They are found in the Old Testament, whose writers as truthful prophets of God reveal His plan to use the Jewish Messiah to rescue the Jewish people from their enemies and both Jews and Gentiles from His eternal condemnation. It is mainly to the OT, because the New Testament did not yet exist, that Paul refers the Roman Christians for their acquiring a knowledge and understanding of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Yet, he is going to provide them his own rendition to instruct them in the uniqueness of Jesus for their salvation.

³ περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα – God's "Son" is a technical term for the descendant of David who acts as both King of the eternal Kingdom of God and Priest of sinful human beings who will need him as advocate at the judgment of God in order to obtain His eternal mercy. Cf. 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 2, Psalm 8, Psalm 89, etc. for passages describing the Davidic Covenant where God declares to David as the first Son of God that his descendant will also be the Son of God. As a complete human being acting in the role of God within the creation, Jesus was the one and only descendant of David who will also act in the role of King of the eternal Kingdom of God and Priest at the final judgment (cf. Hebrews). David and all other of his descendants who were kings of Israel, e.g., Solomon, Rehoboam, et al., were neither priests nor the *final* king of Israel. These roles are designated for the one unique descendant of David, Jesus of Nazareth.

⁴ τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἀγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν – Jesus of Nazareth was a completely different human being from all others who have lived on earth. He was not only morally perfect but also God incarnate, so that his entire life of announcing his identity and verifying it through his actions, especially his crucifixion, qualified him to be declared by God to be the Son of God and Messiah, which God affirmed by raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus was also unique among all human beings in that he was the only son of God, i.e., in the line of David, Solomon, Rehoboam, et al., who would be the permanent and eternal Son of God (capital "S") who would rule over the eternal Kingdom of God.

Paul refers to Jesus' different "spirit," which is the role that God has planned for him in His mind from before the beginning of the creation. And Jesus clearly lived according to his unique spirit and role by always obeying God the Father.

Paul also calls him "our Lord," using the 1st person plural possessive pronoun to refer to others with him in Corinth, where he is writing this letter, who are his apostolic co-workers, even though he does not name them here. Instead, he lists them at the end of the letter in 16:21—Timothy, Lucius, Jason, and Sopater. Probably, Tertius, Gaius, Erastus, and Quartus can be included in this list.

⁵ δι' οὗ ἐλάβομεν χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ – Paul has already switched from the 1st person singular to 1st person plural in order to include his current traveling companion, Timothy, as a member of his apostolic entourage, probably along with others who are mentioned in 16:21ff. Paul comments that God has given them grace, which he will say later is the key element of God's activity towards sinful human beings who deserve only His anger and destruction (cf. Romans 3:24, "so that they are justified as a gift by means of His grace in the light of the redemption that is because of the Messiah Jesus"). Also, Paul knows that if God has assigned him the responsibility of proclaiming to the Gentiles the message of Jesus as the Messiah, that it will not be for nothing. There will be a positive response of genuine obedience to the message among the Gentiles. Some Gentiles will believe the gospel and order their lives in line with the moral commandments of Jesus and God. And all this is for the sake of Jesus' name, i.e., his purpose and what he is all about. In other words, Jesus' mission would not be complete if there were no Gentiles to rule over. He will restore the Kingdom of Israel for the Jews, and he will bring about eternal salvation and life for both Jews and Gentiles.

Romans 16:21 Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you, along with Lucius, Jason, and Sopater, my kinsmen.

⁶ ἐν οἷς ἔστε καὶ ὑμεῖς κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Clearly, these Roman Gentile Christians are among those whom God has purposed to become believers in Jesus as the Messiah, even though the apostle Paul had not personally been the apostolic tool of God to provide them with this information. This shows that people in the 1st century Roman Empire were becoming Christians

apart from personal contact with an apostle, while also they were equally dependent as all other Christians on the apostles as the source of authoritative truth regarding Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah.

⁷ πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ὅτι ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἡ ἀγαπητοὶς θεοῦ, κλητοὶς ἁγίοις, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – God has demonstrated His love to these Gentiles by changing them inwardly and causing them to grab onto the New Testament message by their abandoning their former Roman paganism and believing in Jesus as the Messiah, thus making them really different and of a completely separate category in comparison to their non-Jewish, pagan friends and fellow-citizens of Rome. God has called them to Himself and made them members of the group who will acquire eternal life.

What a radical change for non-Jews living so far away from Israel and having had probably very little exposure to Old Testament Judaism. It would take a miracle of God to pull this off. Paul ends this introduction by wishing further kindness from God and wholeness in life as much as is possible for a depraved human being in the present, temporal realm, and certainly on into the eternal realm. Thus, his salutation is for this kindness and wholeness to come both from God who is the Father of Christians by virtue of His creating and choosing them, and from Jesus as the final Davidic king, which will especially be the case at the final judgment when Jesus is a successful advocate before the Father for eternal mercy on behalf of authentic believers.

The two ideas of God's love for people and their being different from the rest of humanity are also mentioned by Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, "We are obligated to thank God always for you, brothers, who are loved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation because of your set-apart spirit and belief in the truth."

⁸ Πρῶτον μὲν εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου ὅτι διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ περὶ πάντων ὑμῶν ὅτι ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν καταγγέλλεται ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ – Rather than be concerned that he was not the one who first proclaimed the Messianic message to the Roman Gentiles, Paul is delighted to know about their belief and that it is fairly common knowledge within the Roman Empire. For the people of the Roman Empire in the 1st century, the empire constituted the "whole world." Probably, his statement about their belief's being proclaimed throughout the Roman Empire (as much as he is aware of it) is his way of saying that, as far as he is concerned, their belief is genuine and persevering, which it must be in order for them to gain the final goal of belief in the Jewish Messiah, eternal mercy and life.

⁹ μάρτυς γὰρ μοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ θεός, ὃ λατρεύω ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὡς ἀδιαλείπτως μνεῖαν ὑμῶν ποιούμεναι – While Jesus' "spirit" characterizes him as a human being to be the Messiah, Paul's "spirit" characterizes him to be a caring and loving apostle who deals properly with other human beings, which includes his speaking to God about these Roman Gentile Christians whom he has never seen. It is not that Paul is always praying, because there are other things that he does in life, such as proclaim the gospel, eat his food, converse with other people, etc., i.e., things that include what all human beings do. Instead, he repeatedly (ἀδιαλείπτως) prays when he gets the opportunity.

¹⁰ πάντοτε ἐπὶ τῶν προσευχῶν μου δεόμενος εἴ πως ἤδη ποτὲ εὐδοκηθῶμαι ἐν τῷ θελήματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἔλθειν πρὸς ὑμᾶς – Whenever Paul does get the opportunity to pray, as a good apostle, he would love to visit Rome and interact with these Gentiles regarding the message of Jesus as the Messiah and mentions this. Thus, he requests of God that he eventually get to Rome and spend some time with them. Little does he know that this will all happen because of his being arrested and put on trial by both the Jews and the Romans (cf. Acts 21ff.). In the meantime, Paul acknowledges that any success on his part in making it to Rome will be because God allows it based upon his sovereign writing of the story of creation. Until then, he must wait for God to include this in His story.

¹¹ ἐπιποθῶ γὰρ ἰδεῖν ὑμᾶς, ἵνα τι μεταδῶ χάρισμα ὑμῖν πνευματικὸν εἰς τὸ στηριχθῆναι ὑμᾶς – Not that these Roman Christians could not obtain eternal life strictly through their belief in Jesus as a result of what they have heard so far about him, but Paul desires to firm up more completely their understanding of the biblical message by using his apostolic knowledge, skills, and authority to convey the message to them. The result would be that Paul would give the Roman Gentile Christians a gift, indeed a spiritual gift, his clear understanding of the apostolic message that would enhance their understanding of it, which, in turn, would provide them with a greater intellectual foundation for believing these ideas. Paul implies that this would also result in their giving him a gift—the enjoyment of seeing other people embrace these biblical ideas, which, in turn, would strengthen his own belief as he experiences a level of success in his efforts to carry out his God-mandated responsibility of proclaiming the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah to the Gentiles of the Roman Empire (cf. Acts 9).

¹² τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν συμπαράκληθῆναι ἐν ὑμῖν διὰ τῆς ἐν ἀλλήλοις πίστεως ὑμῶν τε καὶ ἐμοῦ – Paul also confirms that, in spite of his being an apostle, he benefits from interacting with other Christians by being encouraged in his belief and commitment to the NT message. He probably helps himself by listening to his own words as he repeats the ideas that he has known and been teaching for many years after restudying the Old Testament with Jesus' help and learning it accurately—that it points to Jesus of Nazareth as the Jewish Messiah and eternal king and priest. And his listeners help him by interacting with him on these ideas and embracing them with joy and enthusiasm.

¹³ οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, ἀδελφοί, ὅτι πολλάκις προεθέμην ἔλθειν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἐκωλύθη ἄχρι τοῦ δεῦρο, ἵνα τινὰ καρπὸν σχῶ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν καθὼς καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ἔθνεσιν – Paul's desire is to let the Roman Christians know how much he has sought to visit them in order that he may fulfill his Gentile responsibility towards even them, in spite of the fact that they are already Christians. He wants to see their understanding of the Jewish Messiah grow from personal contact with him, an apostle, especially after they have come out of Roman paganism and converted to a belief in the one, true God and His Messiah. However, his plans to do so just have not come together so far—because it is not yet God's sovereign desire for it to happen. It will happen later as Luke tells us in Acts 27-28.

¹⁴ Ἑλλήσιν τε καὶ βαρβάρους, σοφοῖς τε καὶ ἀνοήτοις ὀφειλέτης εἰμί – Paul's apostolic responsibility as given to him by God requires that he proclaim the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah to all whom he encounters, while eventually his main obligation is to the Gentiles, which includes "barbarians," i.e., slaves who have been acquired from far away lands that have been

conquered by the Romans and who definitely are considered as lower class inhabitants of the Romans Empire. Paul has tried to communicate the information about Jesus to the Jews, but he mostly met with rejection (cf. Acts 13-14). Thus, he learned his lesson both from the original statement that Jesus had made to him about sending him to the Gentiles and from the obvious lack of interest in Jesus as their Messiah by the Jews. He definitely is called to be the one and only apostle to the Gentiles. As long as a person is a living, breathing non-Jewish human being, Paul is theologically obligated to proclaim to him the message of Jesus' messiahship. This is to both the upper class, the "Greeks," i.e., people who have adopted the Greek culture because of its sophistication, and the lower class, "the barbarians" who lack cultural sophistication.

¹⁵ οὕτως τὸ κατ' ἐμὲ πρόθυμον καὶ ὑμῖν τοῖς ἐν Ῥώμῃ εὐαγγελίσασθαι – Probably especially because Rome is Rome, Paul would love to get there and present this information about the Jewish Messiah to its community. And the fact that his readers are already believers in Jesus as the Jewish Messiah does not at all diminish his enthusiasm to "evangelize" them, i.e., to proclaim the good news of God's eternal mercy that is made available through Jesus as high priest on the day of judgment and king in the eternal Kingdom of God.

¹⁶ Οὐ γὰρ ἐπαισχύνομαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡ δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε ἡ ἑλλήνι – Certainly, Paul would never really be embarrassed about the information of Jesus as the Messiah. After all, the biblical message of Jesus of Nazareth as the eternal Jewish Messiah is the most important information that a human being can hear. Therefore, this must be simply a way for Paul to state the importance of the information. But is he thinking that the Roman Christians might become embarrassed by it when they feel the pressure from Jews to make the Mosaic Covenant central to their relationship with God. "Oops, we did not realize we were on the wrong path," they might think. Paul will affirm the centrality of Jesus in this letter—as he does in all his letters.

When God uses the gospel in a person's life and heart, it packs a divine and powerful punch by causing the person to be changed inwardly so as to believe it, thus qualifying him to escape God's eternal condemnation and the destruction that he deserves. Because the Jews are God's "chosen people" on earth and play a special role of revealing God as a people group to all other people groups in the present realm (cf. Deuteronomy 4), they, in a sense, have the right of first refusal to the message with the Gentiles' following just behind in their right to hear the message and either embrace it or reject it.

Here Paul uses "Greek" to refer to not just the sophisticated upper class of Roman society, but to all non-Jews regardless of their station in society.

¹⁷ δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, καθὼς γέγραπται ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται – The Greek word *dikaisounai* (δικαιοσύνη) basically means forgiveness, i.e., being released by God from one's obligation as a sinful human being to be punished eternally for having rebelled against God. Thus, a person is pardoned of his crime or crimes. It is this release from eternal punishment that God grants to people who genuinely believe the message of Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Romans 3:21ff.). The word justification incorporates these ideas.

It is not that "belief" *per se* is some sort of magic wand that a human being waves in order to obtain justification and escape God's condemnation, but it is that which identifies a person's fundamental commitment to an understanding of the nature of reality that matches God's. And it is this latter idea that God requires to be saved from His wrath and condemnation. If a person believes wholeheartedly that the moon is made of Swiss cheese and declares that this is his most important knowledge of the nature of reality, then this identifies his fundamental commitment, so that he lives his life in the light of this apparent fact. In other words, his every thought and action can be related to and tied to his belief that the moon is made of Swiss cheese, even if it cannot be tied to other things that are true. If a person believes wholeheartedly that Jesus is the biblical Messiah, so that he lives his life in the light of this fact, then this identifies his most basic commitment as a human being and qualifies him to escape God's eternal condemnation.

In Habakkuk, God promises through and to the prophet not only that He is going to bring destruction upon the Jews by means of the Babylonians, but also that He is going to grant eternal life to any Jew who genuinely believes Him for His promises through Abraham to shape the Jews eventually into a great nation and to rescue into eternal life anyone, Jew or Gentile, who authentically mimics Abraham's belief in Him. Here Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4, where God declares that the proud Jew will reject the biblical message, even while religiously performing the Mosaic Covenant. On the other hand, the Jew who is willing to believe the promises that God gave to Abraham, even while experiencing God's judgment on the Jews in Habakkuk's day, will receive eternal life. Thus, pride is the enemy of belief and truth, while humility is their friend. Cf. Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38 where Habakkuk 2:4 is also quoted in the NT.

Paul explicitly states the importance of belief here at the beginning of the letter and will develop his case that it is belief brought about by the miraculous inward work of the Spirit of God which marks an authentic child of God as opposed to someone's simply performing the religious system of the Mosaic Covenant by virtue of their natural human ability to make choices and engage in living life in a religious manner. By extrapolation, this is also true of anyone simply doing Christianity without actually being changed internally at the level of the commitments of his heart by God's Spirit. Paul will also show in chapter 4 that anyone's belief that is of the same kind as Abraham's is what qualifies the person for eternal salvation, just like any Jew's belief that is of the same kind as their ancestor Abraham's. Abraham's belief was in the light of the truth which God had presented him, not an add-on to religious behavior he was performing in line with, for example, the Mosaic Covenant.

¹⁸ Ἀποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσεβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων τῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ κατεχόντων – The present tense is probably not saying that God is currently expressing His anger towards unbelievers. Instead, Paul means that He is set to express it at the end of this age, what in 2:3 he calls "the judgment of God [NAS95]" and in 2:5 "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God [NAS95]."

There are two possible responses from God to us human beings. The response that we deserve is His anger along with eternal

condemnation and destruction, because we have rebelled against Him as Paul goes on to explain. Cf. [Romans 2:5](#) But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God [NAS95].

The response that we do not deserve is His kindness and mercy, which God grants to those whom He chooses, as Paul will also go on to explain in chapter 8. He begins here with God's anger for the sake of the Roman Gentile Christians, to make sure their understanding of the biblical message is fundamental and accurate. It is from out of the midst of God's future anger that the Roman Christians have escaped. But how is it that Gentiles, who have probably not been exposed directly to even the Old Testament writings, are deserving of God's eternal condemnation? Does not this seem a bit unfair. Paul will explain otherwise in chapter 1—that all human beings know God exists and that they should worship and seek to obey Him. They also know that they stand eternally condemned before Him if they do not.

Paul starts by indicating that human beings naturally push any ideas about God of which they are aware out of their minds by using immoral means to do so. In other words, they engage in immoral thinking and behavior in order to avoid dealing with good moral thinking and behavior. They run from truth by running towards falsehood. They run from authentic morality by running towards immorality. They run from righteousness and goodness by running towards sin and evil. Paul is saying that this is just people's inherent nature. They use whatever technique they can devise, even if they call it seeking truth and refer to the Bible (cf. Romans 2 and the self-righteous Jew), to avoid the biblical truth.

¹⁹ διότι τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς· ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἐφανερώσεν – God is definitely knowable by all human beings. He has not hidden Himself from any of us, but instead has revealed Himself to all. This is the reason why God will act with anger and justice towards all human beings who reject Him, even pagan Gentiles in Rome, who have probably never been directly exposed to the Old Testament writings before hearing about Jesus as the Messiah. We all are equally deserving of eternal condemnation, regardless of when in human history or where on this earth we have lived. Indeed, we all are as deserving of God's condemnation as anyone who knows all there is to know about God from the Bible and yet rejects this information. It is not the amount of information about God that rescues a human being from God's anger and destruction. It is the quality of a person's response to God that does. Paul will make this clear in Romans 2:3-10.

Paul goes on to explain how God has clearly revealed Himself to all human beings.

²⁰ τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθοράται, ἢ τε ἀίδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεϊότης – The mere fact that the cosmos exists and that it obviously must have been created by a transcendent Creator communicates directly to all human beings' minds that there is a God. Thus, the human mind is fully capable of grasping the fact that there is a transcendent, eternal, creator God who has brought all that we see, touch, and feel into existence. We cannot see, touch, or feel Him, but we perceive the effects of His power and transcendence. Therefore, it is not just that the human mind has the ability to detect that God is there. It cannot help itself but do so. God's existence is a first principle of human knowledge. Because of the way that God has designed the human beings' minds, they must and will come to the conclusion that God exists and has created all that we see, touch, feel, and hear.

Thus, the issue is not if God exists. The issue is what does as human being do with the clear and obvious information that his mind naturally takes in and that he cannot refuse at one level?

²¹ εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους διότι γνόντες τὸν θεὸν οὐχ ὡς θεὸν ἐδόξασαν ἢ ὑπαρίστησαν, ἀλλ' ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδιά – Therefore, no human being can defend himself before God to the effect that he does not deserve His eternal condemnation, not even those who are apparently completely ignorant of God because they have never heard about Him from the Bible.

Instead, there is something about our moral makeup that compels us to rebel against God, neither granting Him the respect that He deserves nor the gratitude that we should obviously give Him for His provision in our lives. In addition, people devise explanations for reality that are just plain stupid, and their inward, moral condition can be described as being like people wandering in darkness who have no clue as to where they are really going. Indeed, the darkness of their inward condition keeps getting worse and worse as they progress through life—unless God changes their inwardness by His Spirit (cf. Romans 2:28, 29). Dallas Willard in his book [Knowing Christ Today](#) quotes a professor of biology in the Introduction, “Let me summarize my views on what modern evolutionary biology tells us loud and clear... There are no gods, no purposes, no goal-directed forces of any kind. There is no life after death. When I die, I am absolutely certain that I am going to be dead. That's the end for me. There is no ultimate foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning to life, and no free will for humans, either.” Søren Kierkegaard in his book [The Sickness Unto Death](#) would cite this as a prime example of someone living in despair.

²² φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν καὶ ἥλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνης φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἐρπετῶν – Human beings love to take themselves way too seriously, especially when it comes to the value of their ideas. People actually think that they have got reality figured out and are pretty smart for having done so. In our day, academicians and scientists are so proud of themselves for promoting the notion that Darwinian evolution is the source of our existence and concluding that there is no God, no basis for ethics, and no life after death. In this way, people actually think that they have got reality figured out. Nevertheless, they are fools as they ascribe worth, power, and control of the cosmos to elements only within the cosmos—and not to God!

In Paul's day, pagan idolatry is the predominant way of explaining reality with the use of figurines to represent the natural elements of the universe that are all that exist. The people call these natural elements gods, because they believe that it is these elements that *ultimately* are the life-giving and life-changing forces of reality. The problem is not the figurines *per se*, but the fact that people ascribe so much value, worth, and power to created elements that could disappear in a heartbeat if the transcendent Creator God chose to stop creating them. And they do this while ignoring the One who cannot disappear, because He is eternal

and all-powerful. And, of course, it is He, not the forces within the creation, who deserves their attention, worship, approbation, and gratitude for His power and provision.

²³ Διὸ παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν εἰς ἀκαθαρσίαν τοῦ ἀτιμάζεσθαι τὰ σώματα αὐτῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς – With bad ideas about reality come bad actions within reality. Because of people's willful rejection of God, as the story that He is telling goes, He lets them run amok with their moral rebellion into all kinds of immoral activities that result in the misuse of their bodies and their dishonoring themselves by not using their bodies for the intended purposes for which God has designed them with their minds, i.e., for them to think and do that which is moral. The fact is also that people long to rebel against God more than anything, and they choose to fulfill their longings in rebellion against God. This is the basic way of defining their sinfulness.

In Romans 7 & 8, Paul will identify the "flesh," a sinful human being's foundation moral nature, as the source of his evil cravings. In Romans 2 he will indicate that it is a person's "unrepentant heart," which is a heart that is committed to disobeying God, that leads him to choose to do what is immoral. Here in Romans 1 Paul is saying that the combination of a person's defining essence as evil ("flesh") and his "heart" that is committed to evil that results in the "cravings of his heart" leading him to engage in moral uncleanness and dishonor his body.

cf. [Isaiah 64:7](#) There is no one who calls on Your name, who arouses himself to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us and have delivered us into the power of our iniquities (καὶ παρέδωκας ἡμᾶς διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν).

Our sinful longings are powerful inclinations, and sometimes we cannot keep from fulfilling them, even as Christians. The good news, though, is that Christians long more to be forgiven than they do to be ungodly. Cf. [Romans 4:5](#) But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the **ungodly**, his faith is credited as righteousness [NAS95].

²⁴ οἵτινες μετέλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει καὶ ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα, ὅς ἐστιν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν – The result of people's rebellion against God and sinfulness is that they look to only the creation for the ultimate source of causation within it. The ancient peoples ascribed names and personalities to the forces of nature and called them gods. More modern people speak of Mother Nature but consider evolution to be personless, mindless, and yet "smart" enough to choose to cause adapting and coping characteristics within organisms that also have "decided" to become such from disorganized organic material. People "even revere and serve" their own evil cravings as part of the creation and which Paul will go on to describe. Thus, people ignore God and the worship and praise that He deserves for all His accomplishments. The notion of "exchange" is prominent here in Paul's thoughts. Either a person retains truth and its accompanying component of morality, or he substitutes a counterfeit, the lie that God does not exist and does not demand moral thinking and behavior from His human creatures. To exchange skim milk for whole milk is one thing and certainly not condemnable by God. To exchange the truth about God for a lie involving His creation is to be deserving of eternal condemnation by God.

²⁵ Διὰ τοῦτο παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας, αἱ τε γὰρ θήλειαι αὐτῶν μετέλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν – Paul says that God lets people run with their rebellion against Him to the extent that women fulfill their "natural" human sexual passions and desires via an unnatural avenue, homosexuality. Just as people refuse to grant the Creator of nature the attention that He is due, they also refuse to grant His design of nature the place that it is due. Thus, they act contrary to God's design of nature as part of their rebellion against God and claim that the design is other than it is, indeed, the very opposite of what God intends.

Paul uses homosexuality as a clear example of a misuse of God's design. It is impossible for women to procreate through sexual "intercourse" with one another, just as it is impossible for men to do so likewise. The sexual passion is a strong passion, but fulfilling it through a misuse of God's design is to rebel against God.

²⁶ ὁμοίως τε καὶ οἱ ἄρσενες ἀφέντες τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὁρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους, ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσενες τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην κατεργαζόμενοι καὶ τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν ἣν ἔδει τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀπολαμβάνοντες – Paul says that not only do women engage in homosexuality that is clearly contrary to the design of nature as part of their rebellion against God, but so do men. Here, Paul also mentions that there will be a consequence that must follow from God's being a God of justice. He has already mentioned it as God's anger, resulting in eternal destruction.

²⁷ Καὶ καθὼς οὐκ ἔδοκίμασαν τὸν θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει, παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν, ποιεῖν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα – Paul has intimated this already, that people are rebelliously defective in their thinking about God, so that when God turns them loose to continue to rebel against Him, their defective thinking leads them to act in all sorts of immoral ways, which Paul then lists in vs. 29-31. Thus, their exchange of truth for falsehood results in God's handing them over to an immoral way of living.

They do not attest to the value of having God in their understanding of reality. Therefore, God (as the story goes) grants them permission to have minds that do not attest to the value of knowing Him. As a result, they do not perform actions that are not fitting for human beings to perform.

²⁸ πεπληρωμένους πάσῃ ἀδικίᾳ πονηρίᾳ πλεονεξίᾳ κακίᾳ – Unrighteousness = that which is not moral. Evil = that which is not morally good. πλεονεξία refers to the people doing whatever is necessary in order to perform the evil of their intent, i.e., it is boundless evil. Wickedness = that which is not morally good.

²⁹ μεστοὺς φθόνου φόνου ἔριδος δόλου κακοηθείας, ψιθουριστὰς – Envy = wanting what someone else has when it is clearly not something that God wants a person to have, even if it is something of a non-moral nature. Murder = wanting someone not to exist and even causing them not to exist when it is not our right to do this. Strife = willfully choosing to be in conflict with others instead of pursuing a peaceful and harmonious relationship with them to the extent that it is possible for us. Deceit = misrepresenting the truth so as to lead someone to believe a lie, thinking that they are believing the truth. Wishing harm to others = hoping people suffer and undergo pain when it is not our right either to want this or cause this. Gossips = speaking about

someone's misfortune or moral or non-moral shortcomings to others in order to put them down and build ourselves up as better than they are.

³⁰ καταλάλους θεοστυγείς ὕβριστὰς ὑπερηφάνους ἀλαζόνας, ἐφευρετὰς κακῶν, γονεῦσιν ἀπειθεῖς – Slanderers = common error that people, who are in an abject state of rebellion against God, make is to consider themselves superior to others, especially those who subscribe to the claim that the Bible is God's inerrant communication to mankind and who proclaim its message to others as best as they can. In addition, the use whatever techniques are available, even making new ones up if they need be, to make others feel less than they are. Naturally, a useful technique is to speak ill of people who believe that the Bible is the truth. God-haters = rejecting God and refusing to humble oneself before Him to obtain His forgiveness or refusing to obey Him and His moral commandments. Arrogant, prideful, and boasters = a person's thinking that he is better, greater, inherently more important, and more valuable than other human beings. Inventors of evil = creative in the way a person rebels against God without repenting and seeking to do what is good. Disobedient to parents = those who start at a young age willfully defying authority and choosing to be selfish and rebellious, putting their desires ahead of everyone else's.

³¹ ἀσυνέτους ἀσυνθέτους ἀστόργους ἀνελεήμονας – Void of understanding = lacking a good understanding of the reality in which they are living, including the reality about both God and themselves within the creation. Agreement-breakers = lacking the willingness to keep an agreement in the manner that they should. And Paul may be thinking mostly of the agreement that God made with the Jews, the Mosaic Covenant, as he heads towards chapter 2 and the religious Jew who thinks he is keeping God's covenant when he is only performing it on an outward and superficial level. But it could be that he is thinking of only agreements and contracts between human beings. Without normal human affection = lacking a basic human ability to be kind and caring towards others, so that, finally, they cannot and do not care for those who are in need, even the need or right to be treated with civility and respect. Unmerciful = unwilling to forgive others for their being hurtful, even while knowing that we all need God's forgiveness. In their arrogance, people can even belittle and slander others to the extent that they are convinced that they deserve God's forgiveness, which is an oxymoron, while others do not (cf. 2:3). In short, people become worse than animal-like in the midst of their abandonment of the ideas of God to which their minds naturally lead them as they perceive the created cosmos.

³² οἵτινες τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιγνόντες ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες ἄξιοι θανάτου εἰσιν, οὐ μόνον αὐτὰ ποιοῦσιν ἀλλὰ καὶ συνευδοκοῦσιν τοῖς πράσσουσιν – Paul ends his general description of sinful humanity by stating that, in spite of people's defective thinking about God and morality, they cannot push out of their minds the fact that they are accountable to God and will incur eternal death and destruction because of His justice. It is reasonable to assume that they also realize that eternal life is available from God as His gift. But they reject both their accountability and the gift of life.

In addition, people try to bolster their courage against God by encouraging each other to rebel against Him, thus employing the principle of strength in numbers. People can claim that there is no such thing as morality, but they know they are wrong, just as people can claim they are better than other people and acceptable to God, but they also know they are wrong (cf. 2:2).

Paul's description here of human beings is a far cry from the common belief that people are basically good and have only the potential for evil. While it is true that most people have figured out that pursuing a certain level of moral goodness will make their lives personally more enjoyable than if they do not, nevertheless, their fundamental desires are oriented towards rejecting the truth about God and His moral commandments. People really are evil and have only the potential for good. This potential some people try to fulfill at a level that looks acceptable to others and even to God, but it still constitutes rebellion against Him. Even those whom God changes inwardly fulfill this potential to a degree in the present reality. Authentic believers do not become morally perfect in the present realm, but at least they do not completely ignore God and their sin.

³³ Διὸ ἀναπολόγητος εἶ, ὃ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρίνων ἐν ᾧ γὰρ κρίνεις τὸν ἕτερον, σεαυτὸν κατακρίνεις, τὰ γὰρ αὐτὰ πράσσεις ὁ κρίνων – After commenting on the immoral condition of humanity in general and its consequences, Paul turns his attention to the individual who tends to think that he is a self-actualized morally acceptable person, that is, acceptable to God—which is the tendency for both Jews and Gentiles, while Paul probably has the Jew mostly in mind. But we all think that we are better than we are and better than others, even while being acceptable to God, if we are willing to admit that there is a God. If we did not think that we are better, then we would genuinely repent of our sin. But this we do only if God has changed our hearts and caused us to do so.

Paul has already stated this characteristic of self-righteousness that exists in all sinners when he used the words arrogant, prideful, and boastful in 1:30. And this will then permit him to address directly and more explicitly, starting in 2:17, the arrogant, prideful, and boastful Jew, who firmly believes that his being a member of the nation of Israel and his obedience to the Mosaic Covenant make him not only special to God, a good person simply by virtue of his ethnicity, but also worthy of God's blessings and who considers all Gentiles who are not followers of the Mosaic Covenant to be cursed by God. Thus, the self-righteous Jew rationalizes his lack of mercy and leniency towards Gentiles, i.e., his being ἀνελεήμων, the last word in 1:31. He does not have to be lenient towards people who are not special like him.

Considering that Paul is writing this letter to Gentile Christians in Rome who are soon going to be confronted by both believing and non-believing Jews returning to Rome after an eight year gap in the Jews' presence in the capital city, he is most likely segueing to this section starting in chapter 2 where he will focus on the Jewish perspective on God because he wants to prepare his readers for conversations that returning Jews to Rome will be having with them. The most extreme case will be the kind of Jew whom he describes in 2:17ff., one who considers himself worthy of God's mercy and love because he is Jewish and has faithfully obeyed the Mosaic Covenant and who thinks he can assess other people's moral nature and behavior while he himself is different and acceptable to God. Therefore, he "judges" others without properly and accurately judging himself.

However, Paul will point out that this perspective lacks an accurate self-assessment of the depth of a person's sin and sinfulness. The person thinks he is better than he is because he is not facing honestly into "the same things" that he is doing—arrogance,

pride, envy, wishing harm to others, etc. He overlooks his own sin because of his ethnicity and religious behavior. We typically call this person a self-righteous hypocrite. We also notice that these “same things” for Paul are not always external in their nature. They are choices that people make inside and that may not manifest themselves in an obvious way outside. A person can envy others and come across humble and kind towards them—ignoring the envy. It is the Spirit of God who makes us aware of our inner sin in the midst of our outer kindness and goodness. This then should lead to genuine repentance and genuine humility, kindness, and goodness.

In addition, Paul used to be a self-righteous Jew before God arrested him on the road to Damascus. So he knows exactly what he is talking about. He has also encountered this Jewish mentality in his travels around the northern Mediterranean area, and it has been the main reason why he has had to write most of his other letters. Thus, it is how Paul himself was before God changed his heart and made him aware of the depth of his sinfulness. Paul’s claim here is that people who stand in judgment of other sinners and think that they are not committing the same evil acts, either internally or externally, as those around them are wrong. And this leaves self-righteous people defenseless before God at the judgment, even if they as Jews have been “following” the Mosaic Covenant by diligently paying attention to its 613 commandments.

Paul has just listed in 1:28-32 an entire litany of evil and immoral actions that pagan and atheistic human beings perform in their rebellion against God. And he is going to say that even self-righteous Jews, who diligently follow the Mosaic Covenant while ignoring what is really going on inside themselves, commit at least some of these same evil sins against God. Then, in 2:21,22 Paul will state explicitly some of the “very same things” (τὰ...αὐτὰ) that the self-righteous Jew is committing. His purpose is to get the self-righteous Jew to look carefully at his own inward sinfulness and become biblically repentant before God, and not just repentant in a strictly perfunctory manner that is completely unimpressive to God because it lacks the sincerity that He requires. This section regarding the self-righteous hypocrite is in line with Jesus’ exhortations to his Jewish audience in the Sermon on the Mount – [Matthew 7:1](#) “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. 2 For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. 3 Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”

Paul uses κρίνω 18x in Romans. It means to stand in judgment of another morally capable person and assess the quality of his nature and choices, whether they are good or evil, righteous or unrighteous. κρίμα is the noun, and Paul uses it 6x in Romans. Paul uses κατακρίνω 4x in Romans. It means to condemn after assessing someone’s moral nature and actions. κατάκριμα is the noun, and Paul uses it 4x in Romans.

³⁴ οἶδμεν δὲ ὅτι τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν κατὰ ἀλήθειαν ἐπὶ τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας – Paul switches in this sentence to speak of “the judgment of God” (τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ) in contrast to the judgment of human beings that he mentioned in the previous verse. He says that God’s “judgment” is “according to truth towards those who practice such things” (κατὰ ἀλήθειαν ἐπὶ τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας). In other words, God’s assessment of sinful human beings is not coming from self-deception and self-delusion to the effect that He is not accurately aware of His own moral condition. Indeed, He and His icon in the world, Jesus of Nazareth, are the only persons who correctly know their moral nature and condition. Therefore, God always assesses human beings’ moral nature and decisions perfectly accurately. This is what Paul means by “according to truth.”

But is this a statement about all human beings who know there is a God and who know they are worthy of death for rejecting the truth about God, etc. (cf. 1:20, 32)? It might seem that the “we” here in v. 2 refers to Paul and only his fellow Jews, as though he is saying, “You and I both know that God is a God of justice and that He will condemn to death anyone who violates His moral commandments.” However, Paul’s statements about mankind in general in chapter 1 that every human being knows that he is not only accountable to God but condemned by God for his rebellion against Him indicate otherwise. Therefore, while thinking primarily about Jews, he is referring to any person, Jew or Gentile, who stands in judgment on others and himself, both of whom are members of the human race who, whether they admit it or not, grasp clearly enough that God is a God of justice, judgment, and condemnation of those who do evil, i.e., of all human beings apart from Jesus. Every human being who considers himself morally superior to others knows also that God’s justice is rightly exercised towards evil people. Indeed, he would want God to judge, condemn, and destroy all those other really evil people. Certainly, the Jew knows this and wants this as both a typical human being and a member of God’s chosen people to whom God gave the Old Testament (cf. 3:1-2). In other words, Jews may be aware of this at a conscious level more than Gentiles, because Jews most likely are reading about God’s justice (and mercy) in the Hebrew scriptures on a weekly basis in their synagogues.

³⁵ λογίζη δὲ τοῦτο, ὃ ἄνθρωπε ὁ κρίνων τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας καὶ ποιῶν αὐτά. ὅτι σὺ ἐκφεύγῃ τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ – This is definitely a rhetorical question. The answer is obviously a resounding, “Yes.” Self-righteous people, especially Jews who are counting on their ethnically privileged possession and their religious performance of the Mosaic Covenant to make them worthy of God’s mercy and blessings, do think that by their good, moral actions that they will escape God’s judgment and condemnation. Thus, somehow people are able to convince themselves that they do not deserve God’s judgment and condemnation—probably because they are desperate to deny their sinfulness and to avoid the level and kind of humility that is necessary to repent of their sin and accept God’s undeserved grace and mercy. This is how insidiously stealthy sin is in making a person unwilling to face into the truth of their immoral and sinful condition before God. Both the self-righteous Gentile and the self-righteous Jew, therefore, believe that they are good enough for God to accept them, because they are not committing the same acts as all those other evil people—they think (while ignoring their envy, malice, pride, arrogance, etc.). This is just the nature of basic, human, sinful self-righteousness. And everyone is guilty of it. But being explicitly chosen by God as the chosen

people of God and comfortable with one's level of obedience to God to requirements which God Himself has given him and his fellow Jews, only reveals a person's self-righteousness and rebellion against God—when his heart has not been changed by God.
³⁶ ἡ τοῦ πλούτου τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀνοχῆς καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας καταφρονεῖς, ἀγνοῶν ὅτι τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς μετάνοιαν σε ἄγει – This, too, is a rhetorical question. The obvious answer is, “Yes.” The self-righteous person who is blind to the depth of his own sin is also conveniently blind to God's kindness and ignores it and His patience and long-suffering by thinking that he is worthy of His mercy and forgiveness because of his good, moral actions. While either ignoring God or thinking He accepts them on the basis of their good behavior, people refuse to come to grips with their sin and God's profound kindness and patience whereby He forgives sin regardless of how many they have piled up in their individual lives and how heinous and evil they have been.

Two options for His kindness – 1) Their sin is so deep that only God's active kindness through the inner work of His Spirit can actually cause them to repent (cf. 2:28,29); 2) Paul repeats only the first word of the three in the previous clause and is asking if they really do not grasp the fact that all this time that God is taking to finish His project of bringing about the Kingdom of God should lead all sinners to repent and seek God's mercy.

The second option is probably correct and in line with not only the other two words, “patience” and “longsuffering,” but also Paul's statement in [Romans 9:22](#) “What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience (ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ) vessels of wrath prepared for destruction (σκευὴ ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν).” The word “patience” is the same as here in 2:4. We must appreciate just how kind and patient God is with the entire sinful human race such that He has not yet brought the present age to an end and destroyed all those who have remained committed to disobeying Him throughout their entire lives. In other words, God's patience is not because the Jews are so righteous that they deserve long life from Him, but because He is granting time and opportunity to repent of their sin and become saved from His condemnation and destruction.

But by focusing on his self-deceiving supposed moral superiority, the self-righteous person hides from not only his own sin but also the wealth of God's goodness, patience, and longsuffering, so that the words “not realizing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance” have the sense of “not realizing that the kindness of God ought to lead you to repentance.” The key idea in what Paul is saying is God's patience. History is continuing along as it is with as much evil and wickedness in the world, not because God is really into evil, but because He is really, really patient and longsuffering. And it His tremendous patience that truly ought to convince people that they should repent of their sin and embrace His forgiveness and offer of eternal life.

Basically, the self-deceiving and morally superior thinking sinner is ignoring history, while he also ignores the important quality of God's patience that motivates Him to wait for people to acknowledge humbly their sinfulness and to appeal to Him for mercy. Soon in 2:28,29 Paul will declare that the Spirit of God is the only one who causes the necessary inward change and condition for acquiring God's mercy, so that ultimately the Holy Spirit encapsulates the active operation of God's goodness in people's hearts (also cf. Romans 5:5 to the effect that “God's love has been poured out in our hearts in the manner of the Holy Spirit who was given to us”). But here Paul wants the self-righteous person to focus on God's willingness to wait in order to give sinners time to repent. He does not rush into Jesus' return and then the final judgment. Indeed, we are still waiting for the latter after Jesus' return and he restores the Kingdom of Israel during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. And yet we have to understand and accept this truth in the light of God's being the one who is telling His story exactly as He wants. In other words, this is a planned patience, not an unplanned one.

³⁷ κατὰ δὲ τὴν σκληρότητά σου καὶ ἀμετανόητον καρδίαν θησαυρίζεις σεαυτῷ ὀργὴν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ – Yet, in the midst of God's patience, the self-righteous person must come to grips with the outcome of their lives—God's wrath. Thus, probably much to the surprise of all self-righteous people (except they really do know this), Paul is saying that they will incur God's anger and justice, not His mercy and love, at the future “day of wrath and the revealing of God's righteous judgment.” This follows directly from the willful blindness that self-righteous people engage in, because their self-righteousness, even religious, Jewish self-righteousness of following the Mosaic Covenant, is simply another form of human beings' expressing their evil, just like the various examples of evil Paul provides at the end of chapter 1—envy, murder, strife, deceit, etc.

By willfully refusing to acknowledge his own sinful inwardness, the self-righteous person is only storing up God's anger for himself that will be vented on him when God makes it clear to all human beings that He has been waiting patiently for them to repent and finally judges them (cf. Romans 9:22 and the end of Revelation 20). Like all the rest of humanity, i.e., pagan Gentiles whom Paul described at the end of chapter 1, self-righteous people of Romans 2, including self-righteous Jews, are refusing to come to grips with the obvious fact, even to them, that they deserve and will incur God's wrath, justice, and condemnation—in spite of actually knowing this at an intellectual level that renders them without a defense at the final judgment. No one will be able to say that he did not know enough to be able to avoid God's eternal condemnation and destruction. God has implanted knowledge of His moral requirements and impending judgment in every human being. They simply need to face into this truth, repent, and embrace God's eternal mercy and promise of eternal life.

³⁸ ὅς ἀποδώσει ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ – The very simple fact, as Paul expresses here, is that God will judge each human being on the basis of what he has done both inwardly and outwardly.

Psalms 62:12, And lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, for You recompense a man according to his work (תְּשַׁלֵּם לְאִישׁ כְּמַעֲשָׁיו) (ὅτι σὺ ἀποδώσεις ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ).

And, as Paul said at the end of chapter 1, every human being knows this, that he will face God's judgment and receive either His condemnation and destruction, if he was unwilling to include God's mercy in his understanding of the human moral condition, or

His mercy and life if he repented and pursued belief and obedience to Him (cf. Ezekiel 18, 33).

Even though Paul uses the word for “pay back” (ἀποδώσει) with respect to the two kinds of responses to human beings that God will make at the final judgment, he does not mean that those who are rescued from God’s condemnation actually earn this salvation. The entire Bible is filled with the fact that God graces such a response to people, because the only response that sinful human beings can earn is His eternal condemnation. Therefore, this word ἀποδώσει refers to God’s responding to sinful human beings, not to how they obtain either His mercy or His condemnation. God graces His mercy to some sinful human beings, and He recompenses with eternal destruction some human beings who deserve such because of their sinfulness.

³⁹ τοῖς μὲν καθ’ ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν ζητοῦσιν ζῶν αἰώνιον – Now, Paul spells out the specifics of God’s judgment criteria. On the one hand, if a human being has genuinely pursued doing what is biblically and morally good that will result in the greatest level of well-being, the glory of being morally perfect, the honor of being received by God into His eternal kingdom, and the divine gift of eternal life, then he will obtain eternal life.

In other words, by using the word “seek” (ζητοῦσιν), Paul is pointing to a human being’s inwardness constituted by his fundamental desires. If a person genuinely desires and actively pursues goodness now that will result in moral perfection later, then God will fulfill this desire and grace it to him as part of what is his “salvation.” In addition, the implied concept here regarding salvation is God’s grace, i.e., that God gives salvation to the person who genuinely seeks goodness and who, in no way, deserves, even though Paul just said that God will pay back each man according to his deeds (ὃς ἀποδώσει ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ). In the case of the person who obtains salvation, the “pay back” is never on the basis of his deserving it, while, in the case of the person who suffers God’s anger and destruction, it is definitely because he deserves them. Thus, we see that Paul has no problem using language that normally involves the concept of being worthy of something, and, yet, Paul is talking about God’s grace where the recipient deserves the exact opposite of what he gets.

⁴⁰ τοῖς δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας καὶ ἀπειθοῦσι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πειθομένοις δὲ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ ὀργὴ καὶ θυμός – On the other hand, if any human being has rejected the biblical truth and that of his own “conscience” and innate understanding of reality that God has given every human (as Paul described in chapter 1 and 2:1-2), so that this person has an insatiable desire to be contentious, to argue with God about what is right and what is wrong, and is unwilling to accept God’s definition of morality. As a result, God will recompense him with an angry response.

⁴¹ θλίψις καὶ στενοχωρία ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ψυχὴν ἀνθρώπου τοῦ κατεργαζομένου τὸ κακόν, Ἰουδαίου τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλλήνος – The result of God’s wrath and anger in judgment of those who disobey Him will be what Paul calls affliction and anguish. These refer to the measured punishment that each unbelieving sinner will receive. But in this verse Paul does not mention complete destruction, which he will three verses later in **Romans 2:12** Consequently, those who sin outside the Covenant will indeed suffer destruction (ἀπολοῦνται) outside the Covenant, and those who sin in the midst of the Covenant will also be judged through the Covenant. He will mention it as well in **Romans 9:22** What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for **destruction** (σκευὴ ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν).

Here in 2:9 Paul wants to highlight that people who do not repent of their sin and seek God’s mercy and immortality deserve His punishment, which they will not be able to avoid.

And Paul states straightforwardly that the ethnic affiliation of a human being is irrelevant to God when He judges everyone. The Jew who pursues evil on the basis of his sinfulness will encounter God’s condemnation that is characterized by agonizing punishment just as easily and as much as the Gentile who does the same.

Paul does mention though that there is a position that the Jew holds in human history that is considered above that of any Gentile. It was Abraham and his physical descendants, the Jews, to whom God gave specific and unique promises of His giving them the land of Israel, many descendants to live on the land, and the existence as a great nation in the world (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). God also made a particular agreement with only them that was supposed to result in their demonstrating their unique position by following the instructions and commandments of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Exodus-Deuteronomy). Thus, in a sense, the Jew is “first” in line to receive God’s blessings, as Paul intimates in Romans 2:10, “to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” However, we see in v. 9 that the Jew is also “first” in line to receive God’s wrath and eternal condemnation, revealing the fact that ultimately there is no *eternal* favoritism towards the Jews by their being the earthly chosen people of God in human history to demonstrate explicitly through their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant this choice by God. Cf. the next paragraph, Romans 2:11-16.

⁴² δόξα δὲ καὶ τιμὴ καὶ εἰρήνη παντὶ τῷ ἐργαζομένῳ τὸ ἀγαθόν, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι – Likewise, the Jew who genuinely pursues morality in contrast to his innate sinfulness will obtain the honorable distinction of becoming morally perfect in the eternal Kingdom of God just as easily and as much as the Gentile who does the same. Therefore, Paul must be referring to a different kind of goodness than that of the self-righteous Jew who is looking strictly at his following the Mosaic Covenant as the means to making himself worthy of God’s love and acceptance at the judgment. Instead, Paul is referring to a good inwardness that is divinely caused by God and can exist in both Jews and Gentiles *apart from the Mosaic Covenant*. And this good inwardness is in conjunction with external actions of goodness in line with the biblical commandments regarding love for one’s fellow Christian and fellow man.

⁴³ οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν προσωποληψία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ – When it comes to the judgment, the Jews have no advantage before God, which would come as a great surprise to them when it is clear from the OT that God chose them to be His special people within human history via the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. But the message of Jesus of Nazareth as the Jewish Messiah is not about how all human beings can become Jews, but how they can become saved and rescued from God’s eternal condemnation apart from being Jewish. Therefore, Paul is also talking about how people obtain eternal life or eternal destruction. The bottom line for him in what he has been saying about God’s judgment is that God is not partial to any particular ethnic group. He has made the Jews a

peculiar people who reflect His moral character and existence that are outside and separate from the created reality, not to make it easier for them to obtain His mercy at the final judgment simply by being His chosen people. Thus, God will judge Jews in the same manner as He judges Gentiles, much to the surprise of the Jews. The criteria, which Paul spelled out in vs. 7-10, will be applied to both Jews and Gentiles equally, with proper, inward repentance along with proper, biblical pursuit of morality being required of all human beings to obtain eternal life.

⁴⁴ Ὅσοι γὰρ ἀνόμως ἥμαρτον, ἀνόμως καὶ ἀπολοῦνται, καὶ ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ ἥμαρτον, διὰ νόμου κριθήσονται –

The words ἀνόμως and ἐν νόμῳ could refer to either the entire Torah, i.e., the Old Testament, or just the Mosaic Covenant. Probably just the Covenant is in view here since Paul is comparing the Jews to whom God gave the Mosaic Covenant with the Gentiles who have no obligation to it.

Paul uses the Greek word νόμος (*nomos*) 74 times in Romans. Most English Bibles translate it “Law” as if he is referring to the Mosaic Covenant. In the Greek version of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, *nomos* is used to translate the Hebrew word Torah, which literally means “instruction” but can refer broadly to the first five books of the Old Testament or narrowly to the Mosaic Covenant. In Romans, Paul uses it mainly to refer to the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Romans 2:12ff.) and sometimes to instructions that come either from God, e.g., moral commandments (cf. Romans 7:22), or from sin (cf. Romans 7:23). However, I also think that Paul uses *nomos*, to refer to the Old Testament Torah in general (cf. Romans 2:17-20).

With the above in mind, Paul is pointing out that people who have had no direct communication from God that has been written down like the Mosaic Covenant will find themselves under God’s condemnation for their living according to their inherent sinfulness without repenting of it. Paul has already said in 1:18-32 that every human being knows that he is sinful and accountable to God such that he deserves His eternal condemnation (or, as implied, could acquire eternal mercy and life if he were repentant and pursue goodness). Now he continues this thought by explicitly mentioning the Mosaic Covenant for the sake of emphasizing to the self-righteous Jew that he has the same problem as the self-righteous Gentile.

Thus, the specific way that Paul chooses to describe God’s impartial stance at the final judgment for especially the sake of the self-righteous Jew is to say that the Mosaic Covenant is not the sole criterion at the final judgment. Instead, as he has already described, the ultimate criterion is a person’s inward response to his innate and inherent understanding of God and morality that every human being has as described by Paul in chapter 1 and the beginning of chapter 2. The question will be at the final judgment, has a person willfully chosen to pursue evil in line with this sinfulness, or has he chosen to repent of his evil and pursue authentic goodness (cf. 2:6-10)? Paul is arguing that this question can be legitimately asked of and answered by Gentiles as well as Jews. Thus, the Gentile, who has had no exposure to the Mosaic Covenant can actually come by an authentic pursuit of moral goodness apart from it. The Gentile can also choose to continue to rebel against God and incur God’s wrath and destruction—without any knowledge of the Mosaic Covenant.

In addition, the Jew, who may think that he is following correctly the Mosaic Covenant, but is actually misusing it to make himself believe that he has made himself worthy of God’s blessings, will find himself condemned by God equally with the rebellious Gentile. And this will be because the Jew is not living up to the standard of the Mosaic Covenant, which is to be an inwardly changed sinner by the Spirit of God (cf. Romans 2:28,29).

In one sense, the self-righteous Jew would agree with Paul that lack of obedience to the Covenant results in God’s judgment. But the Jew would say that the only way that he could be condemned by God while following it is if he is not carefully performing all 613 commandments outwardly, i.e., if he is not being a good religious Jew. For him, keeping the whole Covenant is central to receiving God’s blessings. However, Paul means something different by disobedience to the Covenant. Outward disobedience is not the problem. Inward disobedience is. Thus, any human being, even a member of the chosen people of God, a Jew, who is assiduously obeying all the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, will be condemned by God for his sinfulness if there is not an authentic, biblical, and inward pursuit of submitting to God, regardless of how obedient to God he appears on the outside. Paul is also saying that certainly the Mosaic Covenant will be used to judge Jews, because God gave them the scriptures and this specific covenant. However, he has been arguing that escaping God’s condemnation is not as easy as paying attention to the Covenant’s 613 commandments and earning God’s salvation. Instead, it involves two much more profound elements—1) honestly coming to grips with one’s deep, deep sinfulness, with the result that a person genuinely cries out to God for mercy and forgiveness, and 2) God’s miraculous inward work of moving a person to be genuinely repentant and desirous of eternal moral perfection, which Paul will mention explicitly at the end of chapter 2. He is also implying that the Mosaic Covenant calls for and exists within the context of these two elements—proper self-awareness of sin and God’s changing people’s inwardness (cf. Deuteronomy 10:16, “So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no more,” and Deuteronomy 30:6, “And Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and all your soul, so that you may live”).

⁴⁵ οὐ γὰρ οἱ ἀκροαταὶ νόμου δίκαιοι παρὰ τῷ θεῷ, ἀλλ’ οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου δικαιοθήσονται – The implied idea here, as Paul will go on to make explicit, is that it is possible to be properly obedient to God without actually having heard from Him in the manner that the Jews did, who then wrote down God’s communications that comprise the Old Testament. In addition, no religious Jew would consider himself to be just a “hearer” or listener of the Torah or Mosaic Covenant that God has given specifically to the Jews. Yet, Paul is accusing the religious Jews of being just exactly this, because they are missing the point of the *internal* component of doing the Torah and God’s Covenant, as he will go on to explain. Therefore, while religious Jews consider themselves to be *bona fide* “doers” of the Torah and Mosaic Covenant and, therefore, not deserving of God’s condemnation, Paul is saying that they are.

⁴⁶ ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος – Paul is saying that it is possible for Gentiles, who by nature are outside the physical nation of Israel and may have never been exposed to

the Mosaic Covenant that God gave the Jews only, to fulfill God's requirements for the Jews (and all other human beings) within the Covenant by appropriately doing the same kinds of things that the Covenant prescribes, i.e., pursuing morality and belief in God *from a changed heart and legitimate inwardness*, this latter part being what Paul will describe more clearly in the next verse and at the end of chapter 2. Thus, their inner, divinely given sense of morality becomes a kind of biblical Covenant for Gentiles and that teaches them what to do before God—repent and pursue goodness. This is equal in guiding them and making them feel accountable to God, i.e., equal to the Covenant that God actually gave the Jews and has been written down by Moses. Then, when the Gentiles pursue biblical morality by virtue of God's miraculous inner change of their hearts, they become *bona fide* "doers of the Covenant," even without ever having been exposed to it.

⁴⁷ οἵτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν, συμμαρτυροῦσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως καὶ μεταξύ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων – Paul mentions this very important concept, that he will also mention at the end of chapter 2, i.e., God's work within a sinful human being, that he has been implying all along as a necessary criterion for escaping God's eternal condemnation. In a sense, God writes His "Covenant," i.e., His requirements for eternal life, on the Gentile's heart, which is to say that God changes this person's heart so that he authentically faces into his sinfulness. In this way, he becomes a repentant believer in God in a proper, biblical manner. The inward change that God produces results in the person's recognizing the importance of genuine, divinely defined morality within a biblical context. It also allows him to observe his own sinfulness accurately, i.e., as an evil thing, and to observe his repentance and humility before God accurately. Thus, on the one hand, his thoughts accuse him as he contemplates his sinfulness, while, on the other hand, his thoughts defend him as he appeals to God for mercy with authentic belief and pursues goodness. Paul will use this same idea in Romans 7:8ff. to describe the process that he himself went through and continues to experience as someone who now encounters the commandments of the Covenant and wrestles with his pursuing morality in the midst of his sinfulness.

Paul is saying that a person can feel good about being repentant and humbly seeking God's eternal forgiveness and mercy. This then is what is required for a person to be a "doer of the Covenant" (v. 13). He must be inwardly changed, so that he can properly acknowledge his own sinfulness, which, in turn, will lead him to avoid any kind of pride, arrogance, and bragging in the midst of all his fellow human beings who are just like him and who equally need God to change them if they are going to escape His eternal condemnation. Thus, this "Covenant written on their hearts" prevents them from thinking of themselves as superior before God and from being arrogant and unmerciful towards other human beings (cf. Romans 1:30,31).

⁴⁸ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεὸς τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ – The most important time for a human being to be declared uncondemned (cf. v. 13) is at the final judgment, which is described by other passages as the return of Jesus the Messiah to destroy the Man of Lawlessness and to set up his messianic government in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:5; 2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation; Daniel 11; etc.). The result of a Gentile's inward change by God will be not only his "doing the Covenant" in this life, but being rescued from God's eternal condemnation at the judgment when Jesus returns as the Messiah and intercedes on behalf of all believers, including Gentile believers (cf. John 5).

Paul ends this paragraph with the statement that this is the gospel which he has learned through the scriptures that pertains to Jesus as the Messiah, that both Jews and Gentiles acquire God's eternal mercy and gift of life by satisfying the condition of being inwardly changed in view of Jesus' being the Messiah who appeals to God on their behalf because of his having offered himself as a propitiation to God (cf. Romans 3:21-26).

⁴⁹ Εἰ δὲ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ἐπονομάζῃ καὶ ἐπαναπαύῃ νόμῳ καὶ καυχᾶσαι ἐν θεῷ – Paul now fully turns his attention to the Jew who misperceives himself and his standing before God, while also having all the intellectual tools from God's written communication to realize his error. This Jew considers himself in good standing before God because of his obedience to the entire Torah and Mosaic Covenant, and he brags about his good standing before God and God's making the right decision to choose the Jews as His people. In 5:1-11, Paul will include "boasting in God" as a definite, existential outcome of genuine belief. Thus, he is showing that bragging about the right thing, i.e., God, is valid only if a person has true, biblical inwardness (cf. Romans 8:28,29), which is why simply boasting in God as an outward reality does not necessarily mean that a person is doing so from genuine, God-given inwardness.

⁵⁰ καὶ γινώσκεις τὸ θέλημα καὶ δοκιμάζεις τὰ διαφέροντα κατηχούμενος ἐκ τοῦ νόμου – The Jew who misunderstands himself has nevertheless accurately learned certain truths from the Bible, that the Torah and Mosaic Covenant are the right place for the Jew to find the truth of what he ought to do, that God has chosen the Jews and is the Jew's ultimate source of life, that the Mosaic Covenant includes moral commandments that the Jew must acknowledge and follow, and that the whole Torah explains what really matters to God about the created reality. However, as with boasting in God (see above footnote), being an avid student of the Bible and being able to comment on its contents does not necessarily mean that a person is such authentically. There must be genuine faith, repentance, and pursuit of goodness and obedience.

⁵¹ πέποιθās τε σεαυτὸν ὁδηγὸν εἶναι τυφλῶν, φῶς τῶν ἐν σκότει – The intellectual understanding of the Torah and Mosaic Covenant that the learned Jew has acquired leads him to think that he can properly guide people, his fellow Jews and Gentiles, who are currently spiritually blind, towards God and eternal life. The bottom line is that this Jew thinks that he can bring a high degree of enlightenment to those who exist in their intellectual darkness because of their lack of understanding the Bible, thus being really helpful to all other human beings. He thus considers himself superior morally and intellectually to the Gentiles.

⁵² παιδευτὴν ἀφρόνων, διδάσκαλον νηπίων, ἔχοντα τὴν μὀρφωσιν τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐν τῷ νόμῳ – The self-righteous, educated Jew thinks that he can also instruct those who are living their lives foolishly in comparison to how wise people can be living if they really understand the Bible, as well as those who lack intellectual and spiritual maturity with respect to the biblical message. The biblically literate Jew believes that he has learned real truth from the Torah and Bible, which he certainly has. And this is the reason why he considers himself as wise as he is and capable of teaching others who lack truth.

However, he is not connecting the dots of the truth properly so as to see both God and himself accurately. And Paul's apostolic assumption is that the Jew is rejecting an accurate understanding of biblical truth because he is willfully doing so in the same rebellious manner as the pagan Gentile who worships false gods or the self-righteous Gentile who seems to be acknowledging the one, true God (cf. chapter 1 and the beginning of chapter 2).

⁵³ ὁ οὖν διδάσκων ἕτερον σεαυτὸν οὐ διδάσκεις; ὁ κηρύσσων μὴ κλέπτειν κλέπτεις – Going back to the first statement that Paul made in 2:1 to the effect that self-righteous people are committing the same acts of disobedience against God as the rest of sinful humanity, in vs. 21 & 22 Paul explicitly describes the ways that Jews, who are actually diligent in their outward obedience of the Torah and Mosaic Covenant, are, instead, disobeying God inwardly. While claiming to be able to teach Gentiles how to obey God, the Jews are not really listening to what they are saying and, even more, to what the Torah is saying, because it requires that an obedient person be someone of changed inwardness and heart. Cf. Deuteronomy 10:16, “So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.” The point is that a person can outwardly obey all the commandments of God and yet be disobedient to God because of a lack of changed and authentic, biblical inwardness. Perhaps a Jew is not physically stealing things from people, but by desiring in a covetous manner things that others have, according to the Bible he is stealing, which is eternally problematic if he lacks changed inwardness. Cf. Romans 7 and Paul's description of his own inward experience once the Spirit of God began working within him to change his spiritual orientation.

⁵⁴ ὁ λέγων μὴ μοιχεύειν μοιχεύεις; ὁ βδελυσσόμενος τὰ εἰδωλα ἱεροσυλεῖς – Perhaps an observant Jew is not physically committing adultery, but by naturally and unavoidably looking lustfully at another woman because of his own sinfulness, he is inwardly committing adultery, which is eternally problematic if he lacks authentic, changed inwardness. Three options for “abhorring idols and robbing temples” – 1) The same inward issue would be true of a Jew who found what he thinks is a legal way to keep from paying the temple tax and supporting the Levitical priesthood in full. He is robbing the temple of its covenantal revenue and violating God's commandments. 2) This is a metaphorical statement about the Jew's supposed commitment to avoid idolatry, which Paul has already described as a worshiping of the creation. By thinking that he is good enough through his obedience to the Mosaic Covenant to earn God's blessings and mercy, the Jew is actually made of himself an idol. He is worshiping the creation—himself!! Thus, it is though he is the worst of temple robbers, stealing and using idols, and the one specific idol, himself, to avoid facing into the truth of his own sinfulness and need for God's grace apart from anything he can do to earn it. Therefore, he is no better than a pagan idolator, because he is worshiping the wrong God, i.e., not the God of the Bible whose grace, mercy, and life cannot be earned by a sinful human being. 3) The Jew says that he hates the idolatry of the pagans because they worship the creation, while he is covetous of things in this world, especially the wealth of the precious metals that were used to make pagan idols, gold and silver. There were probably criminals who robbed pagan temples and stole the gold and silver idols for their valuable metals, which they could sell right back to the idol makers. Thus, the Jew is no less interested in the things of the world to fulfill him than the pagans, while he considers himself better than the Gentile pagan and an accurate follower of the Mosaic Covenant. Besides, because God does promise financial blessing to the nation of Israel for their obedience to this Covenant, it would be hard for the individual Jew not to think that pursuing wealth and obtaining it is what the Covenant commands and promises. This third interpretation is in line with Paul's statement in [Ephesians 5:5](#) For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an **idolater**, (ἡ πλεονέκτης, ὃ ἐστὶν εἰδωλολάτρης) has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Compare πλεονέκτης with **πλεονεξία** of [Ephesians 5:3](#) But immorality or any impurity or greed (**πλεονεξία**) must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

⁵⁵ ὃς ἐν νόμῳ καυχᾶσαι, διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως τοῦ νόμου τὸν θεὸν ἀτιμάζεις – Paul thus identifies the condition of the Jew who lacks changed inwardness to be dishonoring to God, even while he believes that he is granting the proper respect and worship to God with his outward obedience and supposed commitment to the Torah and Mosaic Covenant.

⁵⁶ τὸ γὰρ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ δι' ἡμᾶς βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καθὼς γέγραπται – Paul is saying that, by the Jew's misunderstanding the message of the Mosaic Covenant, so that he rejects or at least misses the idea that he lacks proper inwardness, he actually is treating disrespectfully the nature, plans, and purposes of God in the midst of all the surrounding Gentile nations. The observant Jew thinks that he is constantly sending a clear message of devotion and worship of God to all Gentiles, e.g., in Rome when many of them return, but instead he is completely misrepresenting God, to his own detriment with respect to his eternal destiny and to the detriment of God's reputation among the unbelieving Gentile community. In other words, the extent to which the Jews misrepresent God at any time in history (and the extent to which any “Christian” egregiously misrepresents God), the Gentiles also treat God disrespectfully, because they are not being made to face into the exact reality of who God is. The Gentiles have the excuse to ignore or reject God when the Jew, who is a member of God's chosen people, does the same.

Cf. Isaiah 52:5 – (LXX), δι' ἡμᾶς διὰ παντὸς τὸ ὄνομα μου βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. The Hebrew says, “Those who rule over them lament/howl/rejoice (יִלְלִים)(לֵל), and my name is treated disrespectfully all day long.” God speaks through Isaiah to the Jews of the 8th and 7th centuries B.C., who have been disobeying the Covenant, *even while claiming that they are obeying the Covenant*, leading to their being conquered by the Assyrians and eventually by the Babylonians. The Hebrew word יִלְלִים seems best to translate as rejoice (not howl, as if with pain). Because of the Jews' disobedience, the Assyrians have conquered them and rejoice over taking them captive and being able to claim that they and their gods are greater than the Jews and their God, Yahweh, thus causing God's name (all that He is about) to be treated disrespectfully among the Gentiles. As a result, God is not happy with either the immorality of the Jews or with the enjoyment of the Gentiles at the expense of His reputation and His chosen people.

⁵⁷ Περιτομή μὲν γὰρ ὠφελεῖ ἐὰν νόμον πράσσης; ἐὰν δὲ παραβάτης νόμου ᾖ, ἡ περιτομή σου ἀκροβυστία γέγονεν – God

first established male circumcision as the mark of His chosen people during His making the covenant with Abraham, five hundred years before the Mosaic Covenant, in Genesis 17:9-11, [Gen. 17:9](#) God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. [10](#) This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. [11](#) And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.” Consequently, circumcision became the singular act that, in the minds of the Jews, indicated that they were properly obeying God’s Torah in order to receive His blessings. Then, they simply continued in their Torah obedience by diligently paying attention to the 613 commandments of the Mosaic Covenant.

Paul is here admitting that it is entirely appropriate for Jews to obey this commandment just as much as all the rest of the Torah. Circumcision is a covenantal obligation for Abraham and his physical descendants. Indeed, if they follow this commandment and they follow the Mosaic Covenant with proper “practice” (πράσσης), they will be acceptable to God and receive His mercy. However, the key here is, what does Paul mean by “practice?” The only thing that he can mean is obedience to the Torah with a fundamentally changed heart and authentic belief—like Abraham! Mere outward obedience of God is simply not sufficient in His eyes, because a lack of proper inwardness renders the outward obedience sheer hypocrisy, i.e., acting out a script that has no basis in a person’s fundamental humility and authentic desire to obtain God’s mercy. In fact, the Jew might as well explicitly reject God and His commandments completely—like the pagan idolator, because he is actually rebelling against God with this self-deceived mindset whereby he thinks that his obedience is acceptable to Him. Plus, the outcome is the same—God’s eternal condemnation. Therefore, outward obedience is valuable and worthwhile only if a person has proper inwardness, but a lack of proper inwardness causes a person to be “a transgressor of the Covenant,” so that his circumcision is worthless in terms of ingratiating him to God.

⁵⁸ εἰς οὗν ἡ ἀκροβυστία τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλάσσει, οὐχ ἡ ἀκροβυστία αὐτοῦ εἰς περιτομὴν λογισθῆσεται – Except for those in Abraham’s immediate care, Gentiles were not required according to Genesis 17 to circumcise themselves. In this sense, they are outside not only the Abrahamic Covenant, but also the Mosaic Covenant. Nevertheless, Paul has been arguing that Gentiles can be “doers of the Covenant” simply by inwardly submitting to their understanding of God that is part of their human design, even when they have never been exposed to the written Old Testament and communications from God (cf. Romans 2:11-16). Therefore, if a Gentile, who is not marked by outward circumcision as a follower of Yahweh according to both the Abraham and Mosaic Covenants, fundamentally desires, because of his changed heart and inwardness, to be obedient God, so that he actually pursues morality in other areas of his life, including repentance and excluding the ritual commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, of which circumcision is one example, then he is acceptable to God as one of His “chosen people” so to speak. In this way, the Gentile is “guarding” in his heart and mind the same, universal moral commandments that God gave the Jews in the Mosaic Covenant. Instead of being temporally marked with outward circumcision, the Gentile is eternally marked with inward circumcision (cf. Romans 2:28,29), so that this externally unmarked and humble Gentile is more acceptable to God than an externally marked and arrogant Jew—obviously, much to the surprise of the self-righteous Jew. In this way, Paul is highlighting the importance of inwardness vs. religious outwardness (cf. Romans 2:28,29 in regard to the inwardly changed Jew).

⁵⁹ καὶ κρινεῖ ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία τὸν νόμον τελοῦσα σὲ τὸν διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς παραβάτην νόμου – In this case, Paul is talking about a good and proper “judging” that a human being can do, in contrast to the evil judging that he discussed beginning in v. 1 of chapter 2. This is a humble and accurate assessment of reality, the way things actually are, in regard to the self-righteous Jew who is an observant and learned student of the Bible and who thinks that he can discern accurately the good and evil of a Gentile. Paul says that it is the biblically illiterate and unlearned Gentile, who by his very nature of not being a Jew is not obligated to the law of circumcision but has been inwardly changed through the miracle of God, who can accurately discern the good and evil of the observant and self-righteous Jew, even showing intellectually that the Jew is condemned before God while he, the Gentile, will obtain God’s eternal mercy. And this is partly because the Gentile is obeying the Covenant, even though he has never studied it nor heard of it. The reason that the Gentile is such a good judge of biblical morality is because he has a divinely changed *inwardness*, which in him as a sinful human being opens his eyes and mind to see exactly what the main point of the Bible is with respect to the requirement that God has placed on all human beings, that they must have a fundamental desire, longing, and inclination for both mercy and morality in order to be pleasing to God and to receive eternal life—regardless of their religious scruples and obedience.

⁶⁰ οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ Ἰουδαῖός ἐστιν οὐδὲ ἡ ἐν τῷ φανερῷ ἐν σαρκὶ περιτομή – The logical conclusion of Paul’s argument is that a Jew is not authentically Jewish if he is obedient to God’s commandments in only an outward manner, even if he appears to himself to be adequately obedient to God. This includes, remarkably, external physical circumcision. In fact, the implication is that, theoretically, a Jew could lack circumcision on the outside while having circumcision on the inside, and be more “Jewish” than his fellow Jew who is outwardly circumcised—because it is humility, accurate self-awareness, and divinely caused inward appeal to God for eternal mercy that is what constitutes authentic Jewishness. But this is the same for any Gentile who will acquire God’s eternal salvation.

⁶¹ ἀλλ’ ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαῖος, καὶ περιτομή καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι, οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ – Here, Paul finally states explicitly what he has been getting at throughout this whole chapter and will argue for throughout the rest of the letter, especially through chapter 8. Authentic Jewishness (and Christianity) comes about only when God causes the individual Jew (or Gentile) to be changed of heart (cf. Deuteronomy 30:6, “And Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart...so that you may live”), not when his parents circumcise him when he is eight days old (cf. Genesis 17:9-14). And it is the Spirit of God which brings this about. Paul is arguing that a person’s “spirituality,” which is the effect of the initial and ongoing work of God’s Spirit, is the only authentic “spirituality” as opposed to when people create their own by means

of the their natural human performance that could be based on their natural human ethnicity, i.e., being a descendant of Jacob and therefore of Abraham. In chapter 8, Paul will say that the former involves being “defined by the Spirit,” so that a person is “inwardly inclined toward the things of the Spirit.” He will also say that the latter involves being “defined by ones’ natural-born sinfulness” and sinfulness, so that a person is “inwardly inclined toward the things of the their natural-born sinfulness.” In addition, when a Jew acquires the kind of inwardness in Romans 2:28,29 by the miracle of God, he recognizes that he need no longer be concerned and focused on obtaining praise and admiration for his obedience from other human beings, which is the natural and even immoral tendency of sinful human beings. We all to be affirmed as good and great by people. Therefore, our *fundamental* desire as inwardly changed sinners is for God’s approval, and we are *fundamentally* content with only it, regardless of how much a longing for affirmation from people tugs at our hearts. Therefore, authentic Gentileness, i.e., authentic humanness, also comes only when God causes the Gentile to be changed of heart and to be content with God’s eternal affirmation alone. Thus, each ethnic group, Jews and Gentiles, ends up acquiring a good standing before God by means of the same methodology—authentic belief, repentance, and pursuit of goodness that results from God’s changing a sinful human being’s heart by means of His Spirit, so that he fundamentally desires eternal mercy and moral goodness, along with the perfect environment of the Kingdom of God in which to enjoy these.

⁶² Τί οὖν τὸ περισσὸν τοῦ Ἰουδαίου ἢ τίς ἡ ὠφέλεια τῆς περιτομῆς – Paul has shown in chapter 2 that, without God’s performing an inward change on a Jew, he is no different from a Gentile, regardless of how much he looks as though he is obeying the written Torah and Mosaic Covenant. He is just as depraved and just as eternally condemnable by God. Paul has also shown in chapter 2 that a Gentile, by means of this same kind of inward change, can become equally acceptable and pleasing to God as a Jew, who is a member of the chosen people of God by virtue of his being a physical descendant of Abraham through Jacob and his following the Mosaic Covenant, at least outwardly. As a result, Paul has made it sound as though there is no advantage to being a Jew, i.e., one of the *chosen* people of God, vs. a Gentile. Probably, for the sake of any Jew who might read this letter and think that he has a valid objection to Paul’s theology, or who would want to claim some sort of priority over Gentiles because of the Jews’ prominence in the OT, he asks if there is any advantage to being a Jew? If a Jew cannot become a true Jew without God’s inwardly changing him, then is there any benefit to the nation of Israel’s having been *chosen* by God to be His special people and assigned what looks like a special and unique role within human history?

By “circumcision,” Paul is referring to the required ceremony that God stipulates of Abraham and his descendants in Genesis 17 whereby the men outwardly mark themselves as His special people. See explanation above in footnote for Romans 2:25.

⁶³ πολὺ κατὰ πάντα τρόπον. πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ ὅτι ἐπιστεύθησαν τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul has already made reference to this. In 2:11 Paul started comparing the Gentile, who has never been exposed to the written Torah of the Old Testament to the Jew who has. Now, Paul makes explicit that the truth about God came from God to *only* the Jews, with the implied result that they then wrote it down for their own benefit and the benefit of the rest of mankind. Thus, Paul’s answer to the question in 3:1 is that there is a great advantage to being a Jew—at least in regard to knowledge and understanding of the truth about God. While every human being knows that there is a God and that he is accountable to God (Romans 1), God has communicated to no other group of people besides the Jews the correct ideas about Him and the nature of reality. As a result, it is the Jews, and only the Jews, who have possessed and continue to possess (in written form now, i.e., in the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament, because the latter’s authors are also Jews, except for Luke) the explicit explanation of God that He wanted not only them and but also all other human beings to have.

In addition, because Paul goes on in v. 3 to wonder if God’s “faithfulness” is false on the basis of the Jews’ unbelief with respect to His “messages,” he is also referring to the promises that God has made to the Jews through the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:1-3—the promises of descendants, of land, of being a great nation, and of eternal life for both Jews and Gentiles of the same belief as Abraham. But it seems that the main advantage of the Jews in Paul’s argument here is their possessing God’s ideas a direct communications from Him.

And based upon the statement that Paul makes in 2 Timothy 3:16 to the effect that the OT (and NT by extrapolation) is the inerrant collection of ideas about God that He Himself ensured were communicated by the human authors of the OT, it is implicit here that Paul is saying that “the messages of God” (τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ) that He entrusted to the Jews and that they wrote down in the Old Testament are completely and unerringly true. No other document or set of documents can make this claim. Therefore, while it is always interesting to read what other human beings from other ethnic and people groups have written about reality, their documents will, by definition, possess an element of error, so that they cannot be completely trusted to provide the reader with a good understanding of God and/or the creation. Another implication of the singular inerrancy of the Bible is that even teachers of it, that is, teachers other than the biblical authors whenever they were alive, are never entirely correct in their understanding of the Bible. Consequently, because the only authorities on the nature of reality are the biblical authors, it is the moral obligation of each individual to figure out for himself what is the biblical message. Certainly, this can be done in conversation with others who are seeking to understand the Bible, but no one has the right to say that he is an authority on the Bible such that others should follow his lead as a teacher, pastor, pope, bishop, priest, minister, etc., regardless of how much so called training in Greek, Hebrew, and biblical exegesis that he has received either autodidactically or from others, e.g., seminary professors.

Paul is also implying that knowledge and understanding are fundamental elements of what it means to be a human being. Without good and accurate knowledge of God through the Bible, a human being is actually less than human, or at least less a human being than what he can be. In chapter 2, Paul talked about the Jew who has some degree of an intellectual grasp of the Torah and Mosaic Covenant. This Jew is still human, but he is not grasping reality to the extent that he can, because his take on the Torah is incorrect, so incorrect that, along with his rebellious heart, he is damnable by God. It is not the poor knowledge that condemns

this Jew, but it is his innate and willful rebellion against God that does. Thus, this Jew is less a human being than what he can be. So we can say that humanness is fundamentally defined by biblical knowledge of God, i.e., knowledge that has come from God via the Jews and the written documents which they have provided themselves and the rest of mankind.

Here in 3:1, Paul calls the Torah and Mosaic Covenant “the messages of God” (τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ). Even if the Jew is not observing the Torah properly, he at least *has* the Torah, i.e., the messages and promises of the one, true God that were communicated from God by Moses and other Old Testament authors, so that they were written down and preserved for all mankind and posterity.

In addition, Paul is implying in both chapter 2 and 3:1,2 that human beings make choices on the basis of their knowledge. Therefore, right knowledge *can* lead to the *one* right decision of choosing to believe the biblical truth that will result in God’s mercy and salvation from His eternal condemnation and will result in life in the eternal Kingdom of God, *if a sinful human being makes this choice because has been inwardly changed by God*. In contrast, wrong knowledge can be relatively harmless if a person is in fact inwardly changed by God, but it certainly can help lead to the one bad decision to rebel against God and to continue to rebel against God, *if a sinful human being makes this choice because has NOT been inwardly changed by God*. Thus, if a group of people, the Jews, have the correct knowledge and the correct *source* of knowledge about the fundamental issues of reality, the messages of God in the OT (τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ), they are at least one concrete, practical step closer to making the right decision than those who lack the explicit and written source of knowledge about the fundamental issues of reality. Nevertheless, we have seen Paul indicate in 2:14-16 that God can and probably does cause certain Gentiles to adopt a perspective on their sinfulness and the necessity of His mercy apart from this concrete and practical step of being exposed to His messages through the written documents of the Old Testament.

⁶⁴ τί γάρ; εἰ ἡπίστησάν τινες, μὴ ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσῃ – Translating this verse is a bit tricky because of figuring out exactly what Paul means by τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ. The word πίστις is the basic word for faith or belief. The KJV translates the phrase “the faith of God.” The NIV and the Complete Jewish Bible translate it “God’s faithfulness.” The NAS95 translates it similarly as “the faithfulness of God.” Another possible meaning is “that from God which is to be believed.” But Paul just mentioned that the Jews were entrusted (ἐπιστεύθησαν) with God’s messages to mankind. Therefore, it makes sense to translate τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ as “that which God entrusted to them [the Jews].” And he is asking if the fact that the very people who given the scriptures did not believe them render them null and void. Why should we believe something that God gave the Jews but which they did not themselves believe?

⁶⁵ μὴ γένοιτο· γινέσθω δὲ ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής, πᾶς δὲ ἄνθρωπος ψεύστης, καθὼς γέγραπται ὅπως ἂν δικαιωθῇς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σου καὶ νικήσῃς ἐν τῷ κρίνεσθαί σε – Paul’s answer to the above question is, because it is important always to remind ourselves that God is always the one who speaks the truth while sinful human beings lie about the truth. This is just the way God has set things up in the creation.

Thus, Paul is claiming that the logia (messages) of God, the Old Testament, are completely true and therefore inerrant and authoritative for teaching sinners about the one, transcendent Creator of this reality. As a result, it follows that the Old Testament always talks about God as a person of truth and faithfulness to His promises (and threats, i.e., via His justice and judgment). Indeed, the verse that Paul quotes from Psalm 51:4 is King David’s saying that God is perfectly just and right to evaluate his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah as evil, because David has violated God’s commandments, which is to say that he has disobeyed God’s explicit communications to the Jews via the Torah. But David’s “unbelief” in this situation clearly does not render irrelevant the scriptures which he is supposed to be upholding as the king of Israel, which in turn does not render God a liar. The scriptures are still true and God is still true regardless of how disobedient the Jews became or become. make God a liar. It simply gives Him the opportunity to display His good and accurate judgment of David’s immoral behavior in the midst of His also being a God of mercy who fulfills His promises to the Jews. Therefore, the commandments against murder and adultery are not irrelevant, and God is not a liar. Instead, David has been the “liar” and unbeliever, implying, as Paul says in 3:4, that every human being is a liar in contrast to God.

Paul states unequivocally that it is never God who is the liar. It is man. Therefore, the Jews’ unbelief merely demonstrates their own sinfulness *in the midst of* God’s being a God of truth and the scriptures which He entrusted to them being true.

Cf. Psalm 51:4b – LXX – ὅπως ἂν δικαιωθῇς ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σου καὶ νικήσῃς ἐν τῷ κρίνεσθαί σε. The Hebrew reads, תִּמְנֶנִּי בְּדִבְרֶיךָ וְנִכְלָתִי בְּיָדְךָ.

Also, by quoting Psalm 51:4, Paul is implicitly stating that God’s action of judging is fundamental to *ta logia tou theou*, the messages of God of Romans 3:1 that He has given the Jews. Being the One who evaluates all human behavior and recompenses people accordingly is an all-important truth of God that is provided us by the Jews in the OT. And, ironically, His judgment of them during their history becomes exhibit A in demonstrating His truthfulness. In addition, God’s being the final Judge of all human beings factors into the importance of the apostolic message that Paul has been commissioned by God to present to the Gentiles.

⁶⁶ εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀδικία ἡμῶν θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην συνίστησιν. τί ἐροῦμεν; μὴ ἄδικος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐπιφέρων τὴν ὀργὴν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω – Here, Paul asks if the Jews’ unrighteousness of not believing the messages of God so that He manifests His justice by responding with judgment and condemnation of each man who is an unbeliever make God an evil God? Paul makes more explicit the implication of this comes in v. 7. Does God have the right to become angry with and punish those allow Him to manifest the glory of His justice? Of course He does. And manifesting His judgment with anger, condemnation, and punishment does not make Him evil.

First, it is coherent with the previous verses and the following verses to identify the referent of the personal adjective “our” as the

Jews, even though Paul has said in v. 4, “let every man be someone who speaks lies.” Therefore, Paul’s question in v. 5 is basically as I have already said, “If the *Jews*’ unbelief and disobedience highlights God’s moral correctness by allowing Him, whenever He wants, to respond to them with His justice, wrath, and punishment, then is He actually wrong for doing so?” The assumption seems to be that anything that reveals a person’s, even God’s, greatness is good, so that the person whose greatness is revealed should commend the people who thus allow him to reveal his greatness. Consequently, God should commend the Jews, not punish them, for allowing Him to highlight His justice. But this is obviously twisted thinking.

Thus, Paul has probably heard of Jews (or Gentiles) so desperate to find something invalid in what he is saying that they have gone so far as to claim that, according to Paul, God would be immoral and unjust for punishing people, who have done such an excellent job of allowing Him to demonstrate His justice.

⁶⁷ μὴ γένοιτο· ἐπεὶ πῶς κρινεῖ ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον – Thus, Paul’s simple response to the distorted question about God’s being unjust by punishing Jews who make justice look good is this is inherent in the very character of God. He can judge the world only if He is righteous and not unrighteous, which is exactly the case.

⁶⁸ εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ πνεύματι ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, τί ἔτι καὶ γὰρ ὡς ἀμαρτωλὸς κρίνομαι – Paul goes on to individualize and personalize the last distorted question and its answer. He admits that he is a *bona fide* member of humanity and, therefore, can be categorized as a liar (cf. 3:4). So he asks if it really does make sense that he, a liar, be judged and condemned damnable by God, if He so chooses, even though this permits God to show off His incredible glory and greatness by granting Him mercy. And the answer is an unequivocal yes.

⁶⁹ καὶ μὴ καθὼς βλασφημούμεθα καὶ καθὼς φασὶν τινες ἡμᾶς λέγειν ὅτι ποιήσωμεν τὰ κακά, ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀγαθὰ; ὃν τὸ κρίμα ἔνδικόν ἐστιν – Paul now explicitly mentions that there is an objection to his apostolic message that has been circulating among the people who have at least heard about his proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. This objection is actually a distortion of what Paul is saying, that he so highly extols the wrath and condemnation of God that he is (or should be) encouraging people to commit massive amounts of evil in order to highlight these expressions of God. This is similar to the explicit objection to the gospel that Paul mentions in Romans 6:1-14 where the idea is to maximize sin in order to maximize God’s grace.

Paul draws the apt conclusion that if people are this perverse in their thinking about morality and the message that he is presenting, then they are simply demonstrating their commitment to their own sinfulness, which will naturally incur the condemnation of God that they deserve. Consequently, Paul’s quick response to this objection is basically, “Damn these people.” In other words, their thinking is so far off and distorted that when (and if, i.e., if God does not change their hearts before the final judgment) God does judge them and condemn them eternally, they will be getting only what they deserve.

⁷⁰ Τί οὖν; προεχόμεθα; οὐ πάντως προητιάσάμεθα γὰρ Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἑλλήνας πάντας ὑφ’ ἀμαρτίαν εἶναι – Getting back to the fact that the Jews were entrusted with God’s messages (especially the Mosaic Covenant – cf. 3:19,20), does this give them some kind of leg up on the competition, i.e., the Gentiles, for God’s mercy and eternal life?

It might seem from Paul’s statements in 3:1-8 that the Jews’ *individually* are in first position to receive the ultimate gift from God, eternal mercy and life. In other words, what makes the most sense here is to see Paul as talking about individual Jews and not the whole nation of Israel together. The question that he is asking is whether God’s explicit promises to the Jews through Abraham place each and every Jew individually in the position of being ahead of Gentiles individually to receive God’s grace, mercy, and eternal life? After all, Paul has said in 3:1 that the Jews have the explicit advantage of possessing God’s Torah/Bible that contain His promises. In turn, they are in possession of the written messages of God (τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ in v. 2), because they wrote down what God had said to them. Consequently, is an individual Jew actually better off than any individual Gentile—when it comes to obtaining God’s eternal mercy? Paul is not asking if the Jews as individuals are more moral than the Gentiles. He is asking if they are more likely individually to receive God’s gift of being inwardly changed in order to acquire authentic belief and the result of God’s eternal mercy.

Paul’s answer is to refer the reader to what he has really already said in chapters 1 & 2 to the effect that all human beings are subject to sin and inherent sinfulness, whether the Gentile who is an explicit worshiper of pagan idols or the Jew who is an implicit worshiper of pagan idols (cf. Romans 1:22 and 2:22). Thus, he says, “Absolutely not (οὐ πάντως).” All human beings are “under sin,” i.e., innately and inherently evil for their disobedience of God, regardless of what intellectual information they have been given by God and how much they have learned from this information. Possession of truth and knowledge of truth, whether the truth is innate or written, and even if the truth has been entrusted to one’s own people group, the Jews, does not automatically make any individual more likely to receive God’s eternal mercy. Paul has made it clear that a person must do something with the truth besides just possessing it in his mind. He must become committed to it for the sake of obtaining God’s eternal forgiveness, and this only happens if God miraculously causes it to happen, and no individual, because of his ethnicity, is more likely to receive the miracle of inward change from God than any other individual.

In addition, Paul will go on to explain in other parts of this letter that a changed heart does not make a person more moral either than those without a changed heart. It just orients them inwardly towards the truth in such a way that they humbly embrace what God has communicated—that everyone needs His mercy because of the unavoidable presence of humanly unconquerable evil at a basic level within them. While this new orientation qualifies them to receive God’s mercy at the final judgment, they still have to receive His mercy, implying that they are still inherently sinful at a certain level and come by His mercy simply by virtue of His choosing to give it to them.

⁷¹ καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος οὐδὲ εἷς – This long quote in Romans 3:10-18 from Psalm 14 allows Paul to use the messages of God to back up what he has been saying, that everyone is committed to disobeying God and equally damnable by God as a result, whether the person is a member of God’s chosen people, the Jews, or a member of the unchosen people of God,

the Gentiles. In this way, Paul demonstrates that the written communications of God to the Jews (cf. Romans 2:11ff), even though David is writing about the Gentiles in Psalm 14, correspond to the unwritten and innate knowledge of every human being, to the effect that he is evil and accountable for his evil to God, such that all that he deserves is His eternal condemnation (cf. Romans 1 and 2). This also means that every individual is a potential object of God's sovereign mercy, and the promises to the Jews to make of them a great nation do not guarantee that God will act towards the individual Jew with His undeserved mercy any more than God will act towards the individual Gentile. Therefore, anything which is said of a Gentile with respect to his inherent immoral condition is true of a Jew, and vice versa.

⁷² οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ συνίων, οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ἐκζητῶν τὸν θεόν –

⁷³ πάντες ἐξεκλιναν ἅμα ἠχρεώθησαν· οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ποιῶν χρηστότητα, οὐκ ἔστιν ἕως ἐνός –

⁷⁴ τάφος ἀνεωγμένος ὁ λάρυγξ αὐτῶν, ταῖς γλώσσαις αὐτῶν ἐδολιοῦσαν, ἰὸς ἀσπίδων ὑπὸ τὰ χεῖλη αὐτῶν –

⁷⁵ ὦν τὸ στόμα ἀρὰς καὶ πικρίας γέμει –

⁷⁶ ὅξεῖς οἱ πόδες αὐτῶν ἐκχέαι αἷμα –

⁷⁷ σύντριμμα καὶ ταλαιπωρία ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτῶν –

⁷⁸ καὶ ὁδὸν εἰρήνης οὐκ ἔγνωσαν –

⁷⁹ οὐκ ἔστιν φόβος θεοῦ ἀπέναντι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν – Vs. 12-18 are not in the Hebrew Bible and comprise the remaining of one verse, v. 3 of Psalm 13 in the LXX. But they do make the point—that every human being is fundamentally rebellious toward God, whether Jew or Gentile.

⁸⁰ οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὅσα ὁ νόμος λέγει τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ λαλεῖ, ἵνα πᾶν στόμα φραγῇ καὶ ὑπόδικος γένηται πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τῷ θεῷ – While God communicated the Torah to only the Jews, it speaks to everyone in the world, because Paul has argued in chapters 1 & 2, as well as in 3:9-18, that anything said of a Jew regarding his immoral condition can be said with equal validity of a Gentile, i.e., of all human beings. Plus, there is an international purpose to the Mosaic Covenant as stated in [Deuteronomy 4:5](#) “See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. 6 “So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ 7 “For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? 8 “Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?

Therefore, those “who are enclosed within the Covenant” must be the whole world, all Jews and all Gentiles in all of human history, especially since David is writing about Gentiles in Psalm 14. And the truth that the Jewish Covenant communicates to and about all mankind is that no one has a legitimate defense for his sinfulness and rebellion before God (“every mouth is shut” (πᾶν στόμα φραγῇ)), and that the whole world, i.e., every human being, is under the judgment and condemnation of God (ὑπόδικος γένηται πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τῷ θεῷ). This includes, of course, the Jews, who have been given the Mosaic Covenant but who have disobeyed it to the same level of depravity and rebellion as the Gentiles (cf. v. 20 and chapter 2).

⁸¹ διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας – In 2:13 Paul spoke of the “doers of the Torah,” who escape God's eternal condemnation. But “doers” in that context referred to inwardly changed people who obey the Torah appropriately—with authentic biblical belief because of their “circumcised hearts” (cf. 2:28,29). Here, Paul must mean something else by “deeds of the Covenant,” i.e., actions that a person “does” as his response to God's commandments in the Mosaic Covenant. The clue to what Paul means is the last part of the sentence, that “recognition of sin/sinfulness happens through the Torah (διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας).” Therefore, these “deeds of the Covenant” must be actions that people, i.e., Jews, perform and do, both by looking at the Torah and its instructions within the Mosaic Covenant to the Jews and without their properly acknowledging their sinfulness. In other words, these people are actually ignoring the teaching of the Torah, e.g., Psalm 14, while claiming to obey the Torah. The teaching of the Torah that they are missing is that every human being is sinful and lacks what it takes in and of himself to qualify for God's eternal mercy and blessings. Therefore, any attempt by a human being, using only his innate moral condition in the midst of his natural human performance to obey God through the Mosaic Covenant (or any other religious system), i.e., his “flesh” (σὰρξ), is worthless.

It is therefore very likely that Paul is using the word σὰρξ not just to be a human being, but a human being who is “under sin” and enslaved to sin according to 3:9. As a result, no sinful person can take the Mosaic Covenant and attempt to live according to its commandments in order to please God sufficiently to receive His mercy and the promises of the land of Israel and eternal life. His sinfulness will simply not be moral enough to please God. Consequently, sinful people are rebels against God in the midst of their “deeds of the Covenant,” which means that they are counting on their supposed obedience to God's written communications in the Old Testament to gain them God's mercy, blessings, and promises. As Paul will go on in chapter 4 to state explicitly, they expect to get paid for their obedience, which means that they consider their obedience to be worthy of God's mercy and blessings. With their obedience to God, they are counting on earning God's promises to demonstrate His faithfulness to the Jews. This phrase, “by virtue of deeds of the Covenant (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου),” will continue to figure prominently in Paul's argument. He has already spoken in chapter 2 of the Jew who believes that, on the basis of his outward obedience to the Mosaic Covenant as a member of the chosen people of God, he is a good person who is acceptable and pleasing to God. However, Paul has also explained that this Jew is just as condemned as the Gentile who has never heard of the Torah, because both the Jew and the Gentile lack changed inwardness, that, as Paul mentions in this verse, should lead a person to recognize his sinfulness as he confronts the teaching of the Torah and the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Romans 7, where Paul's clear understanding of the demands of the Mosaic Covenant led him to acknowledge his sinfulness). Therefore, at a minimum, “deeds of the Covenant” refer to the Jew's external performance of its commandments through his natural human efforts. Paul will indicate in chapter 4 that there is an additional component to this phrase, the thought that a person is actually making himself worthy of God's blessing,

forgiveness, and promise of eternal life, with the result that he gets paid with eternal life and mercy.

Therefore, Paul is saying here that even the mouth of the Jew is shut before God. The Jew may be performing the Torah of the Mosaic Covenant as his God-given religious and national obligation, but he has no defense for his sinfulness. Indeed, Paul is saying, a person most easily comes by an understanding of his sinfulness, not of his forgiveness for God, when he focuses on the Torah and its teaching. When he faces into God's moral demands, especially the 10th commandment of the Mosaic Covenant as Paul will point out in Romans 7, he comes to a deeper understanding of his sin. And his looming eternal condemnation is most obvious to him too as he focuses on the moral commandments of God and his sin, even as a member of God's chosen people. Thus, this person moves towards understanding the importance and value of God's grace through the inward miraculous work of God (cf. Romans 3:23)!!

⁸² Νυνὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν – As Paul goes on to introduce the significance of the appearance of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, he first states that God's provision of justification/forgiveness to sinful human beings, both Jews and Gentiles, is “independent” of the Jewish Torah. In other words, the Torah/OT played a vital and central role for the entire Jewish nation. However, God never intended for it to remain central in their lives. Nor had He yet provided the actual means to gain complete and eternal forgiveness from Him. Instead, He did something else that was completely different within the nation of Israel whose purpose specifically was to bring about justification (eternal mercy, forgiveness, and life) for not only the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. And, yet, the whole Torah spoke of this action by God (cf. Romans 1:1,2, “the good news of God, which was promised beforehand through His prophets in the sacred writings”). Thus, Paul is also implying that the Jews can read about this central justification event in their own writings, so that it should relativize and attenuate their concern for just the Torah.

⁸³ δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας – Paul now states clearly that God's provision for forgiveness and mercy that is separate from the central role of the Torah in the lives of the Jewish nation, as well as separate from even the purpose of the Mosaic Covenant for the Jews, is the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, such that simple belief in him achieves what the Torah never could—eternal mercy. Paul has already implied in 2:28,29 that this belief in Jesus the Messiah comes about by virtue of God's miraculously changing a sinful human being's heart and inwardness.

⁸⁴ οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή – Paul also states that God is not concerned about whether a person is a Jew or a Gentile when it comes to granting forgiveness and mercy to him. The criteria are not the ethnic identity of the person or whether or not the person is pursuing obedience to explicit teachings of the Jewish Torah and Mosaic Covenant in hopes of obtaining the promises to the Jews, even though all these have been central in the lives of the Jews. The only criterion for obtaining God's eternal mercy is a changed heart that results in authentic belief in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and all that this means with his fulfilling the role of the final Davidic king of the eternal Kingdom of God and priest according to the order of Melchizedek (cf. Hebrews). In chapter 4, Paul will demonstrate that all this is in line with the Jewish Torah anyway. Therefore, while Jesus' actions and a person's belief in him exists without a central focus on the Torah only, they are nevertheless exactly what the Torah proclaimed would occur and be necessary for any individual's eternal salvation.

⁸⁵ πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ – Again, as stated by Paul in 3:9-19, he says that the reason why the ethnic origin and the strictly outward moral pursuits of a person are not important criteria as to whether or not he will obtain God's mercy is because the real issue is that every human being is equally sinful, thus failing to accomplish moral perfection that would qualify him for entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God, thus requiring that God make a choice independent of the person's ethnicity, etc. to change his inwardness. The emphasis in this sentence is “everyone.” No one can claim exemption from standing eternally condemned before God on the basis of their ethnicity and/or their good religious and moral performance, e.g., of the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, no one can claim any degree of priority for God to grant him a changed inwardness and the consequent mercy. This is to say that no one, including no Jew, is in the “first position” to receive God's grace and mercy (cf. v. 9) in the sense that he deserves it.

As in 2:7, δόξα refers to the greatest level of a personal sense of well-being that a human being can experience and which only comes from being both immortal and morally perfect.

It also makes sense to interpret the aorist verb ἥμαρτον as generic so as to translate it with the present perfect tense “has done evil,” so that the second verb ὑστεροῦνται, which is in the present tense, describes the effect of everyone's sinfulness.

⁸⁶ δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – This is key. Eternal forgiveness and mercy from God comes to any sinful human being, Jew or Gentile, his people group mentioned or not mentioned in the Torah of God with its promises to the Jews, strictly as a gift that God independently and graciously grants to a person in the light of the fact that Jesus as the Messiah provides for a person the very means to be “redeemed,” i.e., to exchange a person's eternal condemnation for mercy because Jesus has qualified to appeal to God for His mercy on behalf of undeserving human beings through his suffering death on the cross.

But the fact that mercy is strictly a gift, while every person in human history (other than Jesus) stands equally condemned before God, means that no one person has “first position” to receive this mercy. No individual is better off than others and is more likely to be granted eternal mercy by God, even if the individual is a member of the Jews who received certain promises from God.

It should be clear by now that the promises of God are intended for a group of people, i.e., individuals in the group of people of the nation of Israel and those associated with Abraham by being in the Messiah Jesus. God has made certain promises through Abraham to the “seed” of Abraham, to his descendants through Isaac and Jacob, specifically that they would be numerous, that they would live on the land of Israel, and that they would eventually become a powerful force within the world, while God has also promised that all those in Abraham and now in the Messiah Jesus will obtain His eternal mercy and life. Paul will go on to explain this in chapter 4 about both Jews and Gentiles in the light of God's use of Abraham, the first Jew.

⁸⁷ ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων – All along, from eternity past, God intended that the Messiah die like a sacrifice that the Jews made to Him using animals. In other words, the Messiah’s death was his making a propitiatory offering to God that revealed to all human beings the gravity of their immoral condition. And this also implied that at his own offering he would be the priest standing between God and the sinner, advocating for the sinner’s forgiveness and gift of eternal life.

A sacrificed lamb in the context of the Mosaic Covenant communicates the condemned status of the Jewish worshiper before a holy and righteous God, but not as well the Messiah’s death. And the Levitical priest communicates that God requires a human advocate on behalf of the sinner. Thus, Jesus’ death reveals nothing other than the fact that everyone deserves death and destruction from God—eternally. And his death reveals that he is everyone’s priest and advocate. Therefore, when people “believed” in his blood and death, they would be demonstrating that they understood the depth of their moral problem and its consequences, that not only did they deserve eternal destruction, but also that they lacked the ability in and of themselves to solve their problem. And they would be demonstrating that they embrace Jesus as the priest who intercedes on their behalf. Therefore, they were embracing God’s solution of providing Jesus as not only a revelatory offering on their behalf, but also an advocate who could satisfactorily appeal to God for mercy, resulting in their obtaining His forgiveness and eternal life.

The Mosaic Covenant offerings were the means for the Jews to demonstrate to God with authentic belief that they were fundamentally interested in His mercy, having recognized the depth of their immorality such that they deserved His condemnation and would receive it—if He did not act towards them and independently of them. In contrast, the Messiah’s offering, by definition, was to be outside the Covenant and eternally effective. Thus “all the evil actions that were formerly committed” by a human being during his life could be forgiven by God. God could overlook these actions and convey to him mercy and forgiveness because the person had grasped the significance of Jesus’ death and believed that Jesus would redeem him from destruction at the final judgment. Thus, it was belief in Jesus as a propitiatory offering, not obedience to the Mosaic Covenant *per se* by presenting the blood of bulls and goats on the place of propitiation above the ark of the covenant, that would result in God’s eternal mercy and forgiveness. But God had made such a big deal of the mercy seat as the place of propitiation (ἱλαστήριον) within the Mosaic Covenant that we can see how hard it would be for the Jews to switch gears completely and change their minds about exactly how God provides forgiveness for His people, to shift one’s attention from the mercy seat above the ark in the temple in Jerusalem to a man on a cross outside the gates of Jerusalem. That it is only by belief in the latter that a Jew (or a Gentile) obtains eternal forgiveness and salvation from God. That is a huge, but necessary, intellectual shift. *πάρεσιν* comes from the verb *παριημι* which can mean neglect, abandon, forsake, or even overlook. Thus, God does not take into account former sins so as to destroy a person right away. He patiently waits until He justifies the person through belief in the Messiah, so that all his sins become forgiven according to His mercy.

Exodus 25:17 “You shall make a mercy seat (מִזְבֵּחַ) (ἱλαστήριον) of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. **18** “You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. **19** “Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends. **20** “The cherubim shall have their wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat. **21** “You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. **22** “There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.

Leviticus 16:2 The LORD said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat (מִזְבֵּחַ) (ἱλαστήριον) which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

Leviticus 16:13 “He shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the testimony, otherwise he will die. **14** “Moreover, he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; also in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. **15** “Then he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat.

⁸⁸ ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιῶντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ – Paul repeats the basic point that he wants to get across, that the purpose of Jesus’ death was to demonstrate during the time period after the first appearance of Jesus just how serious God is about His justice and His mercy. This is in the midst of His patience and His refraining from pouring out His anger by exercising immediate justice toward sinful human beings, which, in turn, provides space and time for people to come to grips with the meaning and significance of Jesus’ death as the Messiah. By making eternal forgiveness something that comes about through the divinely purposed and very public display of the death of the Messiah in Jerusalem during the Roman Empire, God just that much more makes it clear that it is He who causes this forgiveness to happen. Thus, God is demonstrably a God of justice, because the death of Jesus shows how serious He is about morality and its consequences that include eternal death for those who are inherently immoral. Jesus’ death also shows how serious God is His mercy and ensuring that at least some sinful human beings acquire forgiveness, because belief in the significance of his death will result in such. Therefore, the highlight of Jesus’ death as a propitiatory offering is that God gets to showcase His mercy. This is what He has been wanting to do all along and will do

⁸⁹ Ποῦ οὖν ἡ καύχησις; ἐξεκλείσθη, διὰ ποίου νόμου; τῶν ἔργων; οὐχί, ἀλλὰ διὰ νόμου πίστεως – It is important to remember that Paul is writing this letter to Gentile Christians in Rome who have not had to interact with Jews for eight years because

Emperor Claudius had expelled them from Rome in A.D.48. Now, after Claudius has died, the Jews are being allowed to return to Rome, and the Gentile believers in the Jewish Messiah are going to have to deal with Jews who will pressure them to follow the Mosaic Covenant in order to be *bona fide* followers of this Jewish Messiah. In other words, the Roman Christians will face the same issues from the Jews that Paul has had to address in other letters, especially Galatians.

It is also important to remember that, from the beginning of his discussion of the gospel at Romans 1:14, Paul has pointed to arrogance as the main moral problem facing mankind, because arrogance theologically leads to God's expressing his anger and justice towards human beings, with their consequent result of the punishment of eternal destruction. Bragging about anything, as though the person possesses something or has done something in and of himself apart from having received it or received the ability to do it from God, is the natural moral action of all human beings because of their depravity.

Being a Jew, Paul knows how easy it is for a Jew who has been given the Abrahamic promises of God and the Mosaic Covenant, to brag about his apparent special status before God, especially as he performs outwardly the Mosaic Covenant and demonstrates in a visible manner his devotion to God. He points to his actions that seemingly conform to the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, actions that are clearly peculiar to him as a member of the nation of Israel and therefore not even applicable to the Gentile peoples, and he thinks that he is more "righteous" than the Gentiles. In addition, because this, too, is a simple effect of human depravity, he thinks that he is making himself worthy of God's blessings and promises and that this, in fact, was what God intended. He would say that not only is he one of the chosen people of God, but also God has even given the Jews the means to earn His blessings by providing them with the explicit commandments of the Mosaic Covenant—because Abraham was worthy of being chosen by God as the progenitor of the Jewish people. Thus, in the process of acquiring eternal life, this Jew would say that he is doubly blessed by God. God has chosen his specific ethnic group to be special in the world, and He has granted them the means to make themselves worthy of God's promises and blessings.

However, Paul has destroyed the arrogant Jew's perspective, and, for that matter, any arrogant Gentile's thinking that he has earned God's favor (cf. Romans 2:1 and notes), by explaining that all human beings, regardless of their association with God, are equally immoral and incapable of pleasing God *in and of themselves*, i.e., with their own innate, human resources. Furthermore, by having referred to Jesus' death as a propitiatory offering in Romans 3:25, Paul has indicated that the purpose of Jesus' death is to demonstrate man's incapability of pleasing God. Therefore, it is necessary to *believe* and want for oneself the continued work that the Messiah can do for a person, which is to appeal to God for eternal mercy at the final judgment. The logical inference, as Paul has taught about the Jew in Romans 2:28,29 is that such belief itself can occur only if God miraculously changes a person's inwardness in order to obtain God's blessings and be pleasing to Him.

Thus, like Romans 2:1 where Paul has already addressed himself to the arrogant, self-righteous person, this verse also deals with the same issue. In the light of the fact that some of the Jews returning to Rome will be of the self-righteous kind, or at least unclear as to how exactly the Mosaic Covenant pertains to Gentile believers in the Jewish Messiah (as we will see in Romans 14), Paul goes over this issue again, stating explicitly in the next verse, 3:28, that the Jews who are seeking to make themselves worthy of God's blessings by their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant cannot claim to be any more acceptable to God than the Gentiles, especially Gentiles who are simple believers in the Messiah and pursuing general morality outside the Mosaic Covenant and according to God's grace.

⁹⁰ λογίζομεθα γὰρ δικαιώσθαι πίστει ἄνθρωπον χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου – This has got to be a radical statement to Jewish ears.

How can Paul say that all that needs to happen in order for a human being to be eternally forgiven by God is that he embrace the Jewish Messiah as his king and priest—without diligent obedience to the 613 commandments of the Mosaic Covenant?

First, we notice that νόμος most likely means Mosaic Covenant and not the whole Torah or Old Testament of the Jews. The reason is that the "deeds" and actions that the Jews were supposed to perform in order to show their allegiance to God and that would result in their receiving God's blessings were spelled out in Exodus through Deuteronomy, which are the Old Testament books that delineated the Mosaic Covenant.

Second, Paul has just said in Romans 3:21-26 that God's rescue of human beings, whether Jews or Gentiles, from His condemnation and destruction is through Jesus and his propitiatory offering, not through obedience to the Mosaic Covenant.

Thus, he can say that a person, even a Jew, finds forgiveness from God "independently of" following the "Mosaic Covenant," which, in turn, implies that a person's ethnic origin is irrelevant in the midst of his belief in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus—as Paul goes on to say in the next verse.

⁹¹ ἢ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον; οὐχὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν – It might seem from the fact that the Jews truly are God's chosen people within human history in the present realm that He is only *their* God, so that if a Gentile desires to be forgiven and blessed by God, then he must become Jewish and even follow the Mosaic Covenant, which is specific to the Jews and even contributes to defining what it means to be Jewish, that is, contributes to the basic idea that Jewish means being physically descended from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. In addition, the Gentiles, as even stated by Paul in chapter 1, have, for the most part, been polytheists and, therefore, way off in their thinking about the reality of God. Thus, put all these facts together, that God started the Jewish ethnic group with Abraham, made promises to them, gave them the Mosaic Covenant and the rest of his messages (τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ – cf. Romans 3:1,2), and now has even brought into existence their Messiah, and that the Gentiles, have a tendency to be pagan idolators, and it sure could seem that God is interested in only the Jews. Thus, He is only *their* God, so that if anyone else desires to be associated with the one, true God, then the person must become Jewish.

But Paul asks rhetorically, is not the transcendent Creator also the transcendent Creator of the Gentiles and, therefore, just as interested in their becoming "His chosen people" in a real, substantive sense? The implied answer is, yes, as Paul will go on to say in the last part of this verse and into the next.

⁹² ναὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν εἴπερ εἷς ὁ θεὸς ὃς δικαιοῦσιν ἐκ πίστεως καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως – Here we have the continuation of the radical statement for any Jew to read that Paul started in v. 28—that God justifies, forgives, and grants eternal life to any Gentile who simply believes in and follows the Jewish Messiah—apart from paying any attention to the Mosaic Covenant!! Thus, if the Gentile is not circumcised according to the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, but he has been changed inwardly by God (cf. Romans 2:28,29) and genuinely believes in and embraces Jesus as his Messiah and propitiatory offering/priest, then God is his God, just as much as God is the God of Jews.

It makes the most sense in this context to interpret Paul's statement about God, that He is "one" (εἷς) as his referring to God's being the one and only God of both Jews and Gentiles of genuine belief in Jesus, even though Jesus is Jewish! Consequently, in the final analysis, God is the monotheistic God of all people, He has created them all, controls them all in His story of the creation, and justifies/forgives whom He chooses by changing their hearts (cf. Romans 2:28,29). Therefore, even though God has chosen the Jews to fulfill a special role in human history in this particular realm, nevertheless, He chooses individual Jews and Gentiles to be rescued from His eternal condemnation through the work of Jesus, their king and priest (by his being a propitiatory offering which means that he is also the sole advocate because of his resurrection from the dead to act out this role—cf. 3:25). Thus, all human beings acquire God's gift of forgiveness/mercy and eternal life by means of the same mechanism—changed inwardness that results in belief in the present truth, which, in this case and at this time of history, is the truth of Jesus as the Messiah. And, as Paul has even said in 3:21, the events of Jesus' first coming are, in a sense, apart from the central role that the Old Testament has played in the lives of the Jews up to this point, even though the Old Testament foretells the events of both Jesus' first coming and his second coming. In other words, if all a person knew about was Jesus as the Messiah who suffered death on the cross and the person believed this information, he would be forgiven by God and granted eternal life, even in the midst of his ignorance of the Old Testament and the Mosaic Covenant.

⁹³ νόμον οὖν καταργούμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ νόμον ἱστάνομεν – It could make sense here that νόμον means Torah because Paul will include Abraham and David in his discussion, and Abraham lived five hundred years before the Mosaic Covenant while David lived five hundred years after it. However, I think that he is focusing on the Mosaic Covenant because of its central role in the Jews of his day. Therefore, I translate νόμον as the Covenant, i.e., the Mosaic Covenant.

Now Paul asks another important question that seems to flow naturally from what he has been arguing about God's being the God of both Jews and Gentiles. Does the fact that a Gentile can become by faith in Jesus alone one of God's chosen people and a recipient of eternal life apart from any knowledge of the Old Testament, which has been the scriptures of the Jews and central to their lives and identities as the chosen people of God, in any way invalidate the Torah, Old Testament, and specifically the Mosaic Covenant?

In 3:3, Paul asked if the unbelief of the Jews invalidated the scriptures which God had entrusted to the Jews? Now, he is asking if the biblical belief and changed inwardness of both Jews and Gentiles similarly invalidates or contradicts God's messages to the Jews, because ethnically different people can become forgiven and eternally rescued from God's condemnation apart from the Jewish scriptures of the Old Testament? Paul's answer of course is, not at all.

Indeed, Paul states that his emphasis on belief actually affirms the Jewish scriptures and the Mosaic Covenant—because *they* emphasize belief and base even the Jews' obtaining God's eternal mercy on belief and changed inwardness, as Paul will go on to say.

Cf. Deuteronomy 10:16, "So circumcise your heart (וּמְלִלְתָּ לְבָבְךָ אֶת עֵרְלֶת לְבָבְךָ) (καὶ περιτεμεῖσθε τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν), and stiffen your neck no longer." It is interesting that the LXX translates "the foreskin of your heart" (אֶת עֵרְלֶת לְבָבְךָ) with "your hard heart" (τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν ὑμῶν), thus showing that the translators were doing more interpreting here than simply engaging in "literal" translation. In addition, because God always intended forgiveness to become available for Gentiles through the Messiah apart from the Mosaic Covenant, and because the Covenant rightly reveals God's interest in morality and the problem of sinfulness, what Paul is saying affirms the purposes of the Covenant and its place in biblical history for both Jews and Gentiles.

⁹⁴ Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν προπάτορα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα – Paul starts the lengthy explanation of his answer with a question regarding Abraham. The question basically is, how did Abraham as the obvious physical patriarch of the Jews catch God's attention and obtain His blessings and eternal forgiveness? Implied in the question is, was it by obedience to the Mosaic Covenant and as defined by religious Jews who misunderstand the depth of the sin and inability to obey God properly, so that only "Jews," i.e., actual physical descendants of Abraham through Jacob and also Gentiles who convert to Judaism acquire eternal mercy and life? Or, for that matter, was it by obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, even if Abraham was or would have been obeying properly, i.e., with a changed heart and authentic belief? Or was it simply by virtue of his own belief just like the belief that Paul has been promoting that is in Jesus because he now has appeared, which is also a belief apart from the Mosaic Covenant?

Because Paul has mostly Jews in mind at this point in his argument, he calls Abraham "our forefather by physical descent." Also, it makes sense to speak of Abraham as an example of one who obeyed properly the Torah, which eventually included the Mosaic Covenant, even though this Covenant came 500 years after him. The reason is that the Mosaic Covenant was an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant for the Jews. Thus, if Abraham properly obeyed God apart from the explicit Covenant, which he did, then he would have properly obeyed God within the Covenant had he lived 500 years later.

Cf. Genesis 26:4,5 and what God said to Isaac, "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws [instructions] (בְּקִלְיִי וַיִּשְׁמֹר מִשְׁמֵרָתִי מִצְוֹתַי חֻקֹּתַי וְתוֹרָתִי)

אֲנִי אֶתְּנֶנּוּ לְךָ (ἀνθ' ὧν ὑπήκουσεν Ἀβραὰμ ὁ πατήρ σου τῆς ἐμῆς φωνῆς καὶ ἐφύλαξεν τὰ προστάγματά μου καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς μου καὶ τὰ δικαιώματά μου καὶ τὰ νόμιά μου).” This is the same language used in Deuteronomy to describe the Israelites’ obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Cf. [Deuteronomy 4:40](#) “So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments (וְיָמְצוּם־תְּחַלְּטוּ אֶת־מִצְוֹתַי) (καὶ φυλάξῃ τὰ δικαιώματα αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ) which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time.”

In addition, Paul will go on to say that Abraham found acceptance by God to inherit eternal life apart from the Mosaic Covenant, i.e., strictly through his belief and faithful obedience to what God had revealed to him, even before being circumcised! So, if this can be true of Abraham, it can be true of either a Jew or a Gentile. That belief in God and now in Jesus by virtue of a changed heart meets the necessary requirement and condition of God for obtaining His ultimate blessing of eternal mercy and life.

⁹⁵ εἰ γὰρ Ἀβραὰμ ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη, ἔχει καύχημα. ἀλλ’ οὐ πρὸς θεόν – Paul is assuming his readers are tracking with him that “works” include the mentality of making oneself worthy of God’s promises and mercy. He will mention this aspect of works more explicitly in v. 4. And Paul admits that, if Abraham caught God’s attention and became forgiven eternally by God by virtue of his making himself worthy of these, i.e., by virtue of “works” and actions that impressed God to the extent that He would say that Abraham was worthy of His attention and eternal life, then, certainly, Abraham could brag, even before God, of how good he was and acted.

Instead, Paul says that Abraham has nothing to brag about, meaning that Abraham had done nothing in and of himself to earn God’s attention and eternal life, implying that his obtaining both of these was by some other mechanism. What was this mechanism? Paul will go on to explain.

⁹⁶ τί γὰρ ἡ γραφὴ λέγει; ἐπίστευσεν δὲ Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην – Paul points to the Jewish scriptures themselves that state categorically that it was Abraham’s *belief* that resulted in his justification/forgiveness, and therefore in his obtaining a stand before God whereby he was going to be granted the fulfillment of His promises which would include eternal mercy and life. While it might be assumed that “belief” is possibly a work, deed, or action in and of itself that could earn God’s attention and blessing, Paul is implying the exact opposite. In other words, belief is definitely something that a sinful human being does, but he does not do it in such a way that it earns God’s blessing. The implication, obviously, is that belief is a gift of God’s grace as Paul will go on to explain and as he has already implied in 2:28,29 when he spoke of the Spirit’s circumcising a sinner’s heart.

Cf. Genesis 15:6, “Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as justification (וְהֵאֱמַן בַּיהוָה וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ לֵּו כְּצִדְקָה) (καὶ ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην).”

⁹⁷ τῷ δὲ ἐργαζομένῳ ὁ μισθὸς οὐ λογίζεται κατὰ χάριν ἀλλὰ κατὰ ὀφείλημα – Paul’s explanation of the nature of belief is that it is different from deeds and works that earn God’s blessing. Deeds are of a nature that they can expect to get paid with what they are earning. If they have earned eternal mercy and life, then they will get paid with these. However, Paul says that these kinds of deeds and works do not involve God’s grace. And he has already argued in 3:21-26 that God’s forgiveness is according to His grace, meaning that it is according to His sovereign and independent choice to grant both belief and eternal life to a sinner. Therefore, Paul can go on to make the statement that he does in the next verse.

In addition, we can say that an incorrect Jewish mentality sees the Bible as saying that they can make themselves worthy of the promises of Abraham simply by being physical descendants of Abraham and pursuing obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. This perspective assumes that human beings are capable of pleasing God in and of themselves, thus earning whatever blessing God has to offer.

Paul is not criticizing the Mosaic Covenant and obedience to it by the Jews (cf. Romans 7). He is criticizing their thinking, that it is possible to obtain God’s blessings by earning them. Plus he has already argued that justification, forgiveness, and life come to any sinner outside of the Covenant, i.e., by means of Jesus through the propitiatory offering and sacrifice of himself and his resurrection (cf. Romans 3:21-26).

⁹⁸ τῷ δὲ μὴ ἐργαζομένῳ πιστεύοντι δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἄσεβῃ λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην – This verse makes it clear that Paul is drawing a radical distinction between works and belief. Works as he is defining them here do not involve God’s grace. Belief does. Therefore, the implication that Paul is making is that belief itself *comes from God’s grace*, from His independent and loving choice to act on behalf of a sinful human being, whether Jew or Gentile, by changing his heart (cf. Romans 2:28,29) and, thus, causing him to believe in God (as Abraham did) and in Jesus as king and priest who offered himself to God (now that Jesus has appeared, made himself known as the Messiah, and invited belief in him!). And the result of this biblical belief *that is not an action that can in any way be said to earn God’s blessing* is God’s eternal mercy, forgiveness, and life!

Paul is referring to the quote in v. 3 from Genesis 15:6. And with this argument from the life of Abraham, Paul has proven that his “promotion of belief” in contrast to encouraging people, Jews and Gentiles, to earn God’s blessings through obeying the Jewish, Mosaic Covenant affirms the OT and this Covenant. Thus, biblical belief does not invalidate the Torah or the Covenant in the least. It supports them, *because they promote true, biblical belief*, as demonstrated by looking at how the very first Jew, Abraham obtained the blessing of forgiveness and, therefore, the fulfillment of God’s promises and eternal life. He did so through his belief, which Paul is arguing comes through God’s grace. It does not originate with man. It originates with God.

If a sinful human being sets aside the mentality of making himself worthy of God’s blessing of eternal life and, instead, acquires a changed inwardness that results in authentic, biblical belief in God and His truth, particularly the truth that God forgives condemnable human beings through Jesus’ death, etc., then, like Abraham, this person will be considered as one who has a

correct standing before God in order to obtain eternal mercy and life at the judgment.

Therefore, Paul is not contrasting outward works *per se* with inward belief the way some Reformed people tend to think, but he is contrasting the intellectual perspective of making oneself worthy before God with the intellectual perspective of knowing that there is nothing one can do to make himself worthy. As a result, forgiveness comes only if God independently and graciously changes a person's heart and inwardness and causes him to engage in authentic, biblical belief.

Now Paul will go on to argue the same point from another important person's life in the OT, king David's.

⁹⁹ καθάπερ καὶ Δαυὶδ λέγει τὸν μακαρισμὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ᾧ ὁ θεὸς λογίζεται δικαιοσύνην χωρὶς ἔργων – Paul now turns to David's life and a statement that he makes in the OT to argue that his promoting the concept of belief in the Messiah in contrast to encouraging both Jews and Gentiles to obey the Mosaic Covenant in no way invalidates the Jewish scriptures and the Mosaic Covenant. He says that Abraham's acquiring God's blessings of eternal mercy, forgiveness, and life is right in line with what David has said in Psalm 32 about how a sinful human being acquires this same blessing through being justified before God, i.e., through acquiring a standing before Him whereby he will be granted all of God's promised blessings, and it is not through his "works" of doing the requirements of the Mosaic Covenant in order to make himself worthy of obtaining God's promises. This, too, is something that his Gentile readers, who may find themselves being pressured by Jewish unbelievers and believers to follow the Mosaic Covenant to earn God's mercy (or just to be acceptable to God even as believers in Jesus the Messiah), need to keep in mind.

¹⁰⁰ μακάριοι ὧν ἀφέθησαν αἱ ἀνομίαι καὶ ὧν ἐπεκαλύφθησαν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι μακάριος ἀνὴρ οὗ οὐ μὴ λογίσῃται κύριος ἁμαρτίαν – We notice that David does not start out Psalm 32, "Blessed is the one who makes himself worthy of God's blessing by his lawful deeds in accord with the Mosaic Covenant," which would be to think that God's blessing is on the basis of justice, not on the basis of grace and mercy. Instead, David says nothing about moral obedience to the Mosaic Covenant that results in God's blessing, except to imply that repentance for a person's sins has taken place before God, and it is this humble appeal to God for His mercy that has resulted in the blessing of eternal forgiveness and life. In addition, David goes on to say in v. 5, "I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide. I said, 'I will confess my transgression to the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

In other words, David does not appeal to his good works in line with the Covenant. He says that God basically accounts justification to those to whom He does not account sin, which is not because the sinner has all of a sudden become a good and moral person. It must be because God has forgiven the sinner because of his belief in God as the forgiving God. Nor does David appeal to his bringing the right sacrifices to the temple to obtain God's forgiveness. Instead, he appeals to merely his repentance and confession of his sins, i.e., to his humble and contrite heart (cf. Psalm 51). And it is his belief in God's goodness and mercy that results in exactly these from God. And I wonder if David is thinking ahead to when God will fulfill all His promises to Abraham, both to make the Jews the greatest nation on earth and to grant eternal life to Abraham and those with faith like his. Therefore, Paul's using this quote from Psalm 32 implies that, while a Jew would outwardly agree that forgiveness of his sins is necessary to obtain God's blessings, he inwardly thinks *that he is actually a good person who does not need as much forgiveness as the Bible says he does*. This is to say that a perspective that comes merely from one's sinfulness and that only seems to embrace the *biblical* concept of God's mercy and forgiveness falls short of doing so. In a twisted and erroneous way, the arrogant and self-righteous person, Jew or Gentile, believes that his goodness that includes repentance, *earns* him God's mercy—which, in the final analysis, is an oxymoron and does not make sense. But, as we have seen, sinful human beings love to believe nonsense—even that there is no God!

For a person to acquire God's blessing (=justification, forgiveness, the promises of God, and eternal life) by virtue of justice is for God to be so impressed with the person's obedience, indeed, his obedience to the Torah and the Mosaic Covenant, that God considers him to have earned His blessing, which, in turn, would allow the person to brag about his performance and God's *paying* him with eternal life and participation in the great nation of Israel. But Paul has been arguing that there is another mechanism entirely for how people, even Abraham, obtain God's blessings. And the mechanism is God's grace that results in forgiveness. Along this line, Paul goes in another direction from one of justice and earned payment by speaking of David's comments about God's blessing for the one whose sinfulness He *forgives*. And the implied principle of forgiveness is that it *cannot be earned*, as Paul has been arguing. It can only be granted, given, and graced to a sinful human being by God's independent choice. Therefore, the blessing of which David is speaking is on the basis of only grace/mercy, not justice, and, therefore, must be on the basis of God's sovereignly changing a person's heart (cf. Romans 2:28,29) and inwardly causing the person to believe the truth that God has spoken to him.

In David's time, this truth obviously did not include Jesus specifically. But it included enough information that the Old Testament believer could know that he was forgiven apart from his trying to earn God's blessings through his performance of the Mosaic Covenant. Thus the Old Testament believer would know, with an outcome equal to that of the New Testament believer, that he is a sinful human being who cannot make himself worthy of God's love, kindness, patience, forgiveness, so that these must be graced to him. And the outcome for the Old Testament believer would be eternal life and participation in the great nation of Israel, which is equal to the outcome for the New Testament believer.

Thus, David is saying that the blessing of God comes to sinners, not to moral persons who make themselves worthy of this blessing.

¹⁰¹ Ὁ μακαρισμὸς οὖν οὗτος ἐπὶ τὴν περιτομὴν ἢ καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀκροβυστίαν; λέγομεν γάρ· ἐλογίσθη τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἡ πίστις εἰς δικαιοσύνην – Now Paul turns to the issue of the timing of Abraham's faith and being considered by God to be justified in Genesis 15:6. Included in this issue is the question that Paul is answering with the whole letter. Has God designed reality so that only people, Jews and Gentiles, who focus their pursuit of obedience on the Jewish Mosaic Covenant that must include

circumcision for males, receive His blessings promised to Abraham—of the Jewish “great nation” and of eternal life? Or has God designed reality so that both Jews and Gentiles in the midst of either being circumcised (the Jews) or being uncircumcised (the Gentiles) receive them? Another way to ask this question is simply, how does Jewish circumcision and, therefore, outward rituals of either the Mosaic Covenant or historical Christianity fit into the process of acquiring eternal life and all that God promised Abraham? But in the background is still the assumption that sinful human beings still try to make themselves worthy of God’s blessings through their outward, religious obedience.

Also in this verse, Paul reminds his readers of what he has just said about Abraham in 4:1-5, and he paraphrases Genesis 15:6 in order to explain it in more detail. God considered Abraham justified and forgiven on the basis of his belief in the truth that He had stated to him that his “seed,” i.e., descendants, would be as numerous as the stars of the sky, which now allows Paul to go on to say...

¹⁰² πῶς οὖν ἐλογίσθη; ἐν περιτομῇ ὄντι ἢ ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ; οὐκ ἐν περιτομῇ ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ – Here is Paul’s trump card in the form of another question. Was Abraham considered justified, i.e., forgiven by God and set to receive the blessings and promises that He had spoken and given to him, simply by his fulfilling the condition of being circumcised and having obeyed outwardly His Covenant? Or was Abraham considered forgiven by fulfilling the condition of inward and biblical belief, which Abraham demonstrated in Genesis 15:6 *before* the actual time when he became circumcised in Genesis 17? In other words, was Abraham fully set to receive what God had promised him before there was any commandment by God to do anything outward, especially the commandment of circumcision?

The answer Paul gives is an obvious and resounding Yes! And he will go on to explain that God’s blessings, which include eternal life, come to human beings simply as a result of their fulfilling the condition of belief from their inwardness that governs their outward obedience. It is not that outward obedience is irrelevant. It is that it must have as its fundamental human foundation divinely changed authentic inwardness that manifests itself most easily in belief in whatever truth God has stated to the individual who believes. In other words, belief in biblical truth is itself a wonderful and divine gift of God’s grace—at all levels, intellectual, emotional, psychological, and spiritual.

¹⁰³ καὶ σημεῖον ἔλαβεν περιτομῆς σφραγίδα τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐν τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πατέρα πάντων τῶν πιστευόντων δι’ ἀκροβυστίας, εἰς τὸ λογισθῆναι καὶ αὐτοῖς τὴν δικαιοσύνην – Paul interprets God’s commanding Abraham to be circumcised in Genesis 17 as a confirmation, not a condition, of his justification in Genesis 15. And we know from Genesis 15:6 that justification had come to him by virtue of his belief (from his changed inwardness). Thus, outward obedience of circumcision was intended to be simply a clear sign to the person and others that he already had authentic inwardness and belief. By inference, circumcision and all the Mosaic Covenant are also intended to be a clear sign of inward change of the heart and authentic biblical belief. However, erroneous Judaism sees the whole covenant as the complete condition for making themselves worthy of God’s blessings of the “great nation” and eternal life, not as the seal or confirmation of genuine inwardness.

So the fact that Abraham was already considered forgiven by God before God even gave him the commandment to circumcise himself made it evident that Gentiles who follow in his footsteps by having changed inwardness and genuine belief *without ever becoming circumcised* will obtain the same blessings as Abraham from God. These are the blessings of participating somehow in the future greatness of the nation of Israel and then especially eternal life. Theoretically, if Abraham had died before Genesis 17 when God commanded him to be circumcised, he still would have acquired the fulfillment of His promises, because circumcision only confirmed or provided an outward seal of his justification and having a right standing before God.

¹⁰⁴ καὶ πατέρα περιτομῆς τοῖς οὐκ ἐκ περιτομῆς μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς στοιχοῦσιν τοῖς ἔχουσιν τῆς ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ πίστεως τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ – Pauls says that, of course, Jews who are circumcised will also receive the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham, if they too emulate the belief of Abraham with divinely changed and authentic inwardness. In other words, it is their Abraham-like belief, the kind of belief *that he had while uncircumcised*, that is the determining factor in their lives as to whether or not they receive God’s blessing of mercy, etc.—*because this was the determining factor in Abraham’s life, not his circumcision, which came later.*

Thus, belief through a changed heart is the condition which God has placed upon human beings, whether Jews or Gentiles, for their obtaining His blessings promised to Abraham that include justification, the “great nation” of physical Jews, and eternal mercy and life for both Jews and Gentiles in the Kingdom of God. And God by His grace is the only one who can bring this about.

Cf. **Romans 3:29** Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not also the God of Gentiles? Yes, He is the God of Gentiles also, **3:30** if it is true that He is one. He will justify the circumcision by virtue of their belief and the uncircumcision in the light of their belief.

¹⁰⁵ Οὐ γὰρ διὰ νόμου ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἢ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ τὸ κληρονόμον αὐτὸν εἶναι κόσμου, ἀλλὰ διὰ δικαιοσύνης πίστεως – Here it certainly makes sense that νόμου points specifically to the Mosaic Covenant and its ritual commandments, especially the requirement of physical and outward circumcision for all male Jews, since it was not through it specifically and explicitly that the promises to Abraham were made five hundred years earlier in **Genesis 12:1** “Now Yahweh said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; **2** and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; **3** and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.’” Neither were the promises said to be fulfilled on the condition that Abraham follow the Mosaic Covenant of five hundred years later when Genesis 15:6 says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him as justification.”

When Paul uses the singular “promise,” is he referring to all three promises of a great nation, the blessing of eternal life, and Abraham’s name becoming great by people of all the nations of the world imitating his faith and acquiring eternal life? It seems

to depend upon what Paul means by cosmos (“world”) and Abraham’s inheriting it. So do his “seed” (descendants) inherit only this earth when his physical descendants become the “great nation” of Genesis 12? Or do they inherit eternal life when all believers enter into the eternal Kingdom of God, both of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 and of the new earth of Revelation 21? Or do they inherit all three promises?

There seem to be three options for the cosmos and “world” –

- 1) Only the new eternal world and earth that will be the dwelling place of eternal life for all believers
- 2) This world over which the Messiah and the Jews with transformed and immortal believers will rule after his return and he restores the Kingdom of Israel during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20
- 3) The combination of #1 and #2.

Certainly Paul is referring to at least #2, the millennial kingdom. But the last option that includes #1 and the eternal earth is possible too. If it is #3, then Paul is lumping into the word “world” all of God’s promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, because for Abraham to see any one of the promises fulfilled towards him is also to see all of them fulfilled. But the fact that this is within the context of the quote from Genesis 15:6 which concerns only a physical son for Abraham and therefore physical descendants who will have both his ethnic quality of Jewishness and spiritual quality of authentic belief, #2 may be the extent of what he means, even though he is highlighting in chapter 4 the fact that both circumcised believers among the Jews and uncircumcised believers among the Gentiles obtain justification and God’s blessings of the promises to Abraham.

Thus, it may very well be that Paul narrows his focus to Abraham “or to his seed/descendants,” i.e., to Jewish descendants with his kind of faith as his physical and spiritual descendants, that he will inherit this cosmos/world on the condition that he become justified before God through his belief and not through his obedience to the Mosaic Covenant that would include physical circumcision—again because it this latter covenant came five hundred years later. This is to say that God could have fulfilled His promise to Abraham during his lifetime, or He could have fulfilled it later after Abraham had died and his Jewish descendants were alive after him.

The biblical documents show that Abraham can and will participate in the millennial kingdom of the Messiah even though he never heard of or sought to obey the Mosaic Covenant, while it will be his Jewish, physical descendants (and some spiritual descendants among the Gentiles) who will actually live as mortal believers in this earthly kingdom of the present realm. Thus, the same is true theoretically for all Jewish believers as it will be for Abraham (and actually for all Gentile believers who simply imitate Abraham’s faith). I say theoretically for the Jews, because eventually, five hundred years after Abraham, they do hear about the Mosaic Covenant. But this is after many generations starting with Abraham and continuing with Isaac, Jacob, his twelve sons, and their descendants who spend four hundred years in Egypt.

Thus, Abraham received through belief his standing before God whereby he would obtain all His blessings, especially that of this cosmos/world whereby Jesus and his followers among all the Jews on the land of Israel will acquire this whole realm as that which they govern because the Jews will become the “great nation” of the promise of Genesis 12, which in turn will make them the greatest nation in all human history because they will rule over the entire earth, something no nation has ever done.

By inference, Paul clearly declares that God’s promise to Abraham and all his descendants that they would inherit the cosmos/world, either as mortal Jews who comprise the greatest nation in history or immortal Jews (and Gentiles), was outside the giving of the Mosaic Covenant—indeed five hundred years before it. Thus, it is belief as stated in Genesis 15:6, not Covenant keeping *per se*, that results in justification now, i.e. a standing before God that will result in future forgiveness and life in the “great nation” of Israel, and therefore in eventually eternal life for any sinful human being. Therefore, following the Mosaic Covenant, like obeying the commandment for Jewish males to be circumcised, becomes a sign and confirming seal of the inward reality of a changed heart and authentic belief.

God had promised in Genesis 12:1-3 that Abraham and his physical descendants would “inherit” the land of Israel. Cf. Moses’ prayer in Exodus 32:13, “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’” As suggested above, while it is possible that Paul is referring to only the Jews’ inheriting “the world” (κόσμου) as the new, eternal cosmos, in this context where Paul is including Gentiles in the blessings that God grants to Abraham and people who believe God *like him*, it still makes sense to interpret the world as first this temporary earth of Revelation 20 with the future, eternal earth of Revelation 21 as an inference. But the focus is on the “great nation” of the Jews which will involve justification by belief for Abraham and his descendants and also the Mosaic Covenant. But it is the former five hundred years earlier that is key for Abraham and his fellow Jews.

¹⁰⁶ εἰ γὰρ οἱ ἐκ νόμου κληρονόμοι, κεκένωται ἡ πίστις καὶ κατήργηται ἡ ἐπαγγελία – Paul now goes on to highlight how focusing on the Mosaic Covenant by the Jews for their obtaining God’s blessings completely misses the point of the Abrahamic Covenant and specifically Genesis 15:6 where Abraham is declared justified because he has fulfilled the condition of authentic belief in God, justification and the fulfillment of God’s Abrahamic promises. He states simply here that focusing on the Mosaic Covenant renders both belief (that results in justification) and the promise (that is the outcome of belief and justification) irrelevant and even destroyed.

I think that he is still referring the issue of chronology and timing—that Abraham was already justified by his belief as stated in Genesis 15:6 so that all of a sudden to make the Mosaic Covenant the “heirs” of the promise of the “great nation” and rulers over the cosmos/world in the present realm ignores and even rejects Abraham’s stand before God. It makes the belief of Genesis 15:6 “empty” and irrelevant and the promise of Genesis 12 that is connected to Genesis 15:6 “nullified” and destroyed. In other words, the focus on the Mosaic Covenant totally blows up Genesis 15:6 so that this verse might as well not even be in the Bible.

We can also ask the question as to whether Paul is talking about the actual Mosaic Covenant as God presented it or he is talking

about the Mosaic Covenant as the Jews misunderstood it? Really, both are possible because the issue is timing, not the nature of the Mosaic Covenant.

Therefore, as the Jews think, if focusing on the Mosaic Covenant which came five hundred years after Genesis 12 and 15 makes oneself worthy of eternal life by obedience to it and is the requirement for obtaining eternal life, then what does this do to the statement in Genesis 15:6 to the effect that Abraham stood to inherit the promise of God's blessings simply because he had fulfilled the condition of authentic belief—five hundred years before the Mosaic Covenant? It nullifies it and makes it void, because it not only shifts the condition to a later set of requirements that Abraham never fulfilled, but also no one can earn any good thing from God. This in turn renders God's promises null and void because He declared that Abraham would enjoy their fulfillment when, according to the Jewish thinking of Paul's (and our) day, clearly he would not because he had not earned God's blessings through obedience to the Mosaic Covenant.

Plus, the declaration of Abraham's having fulfilled the requirement to inherit God's promises would be meaningless if God required that he obey the Mosaic Covenant to do so, especially that he make himself worthy of them through his obedience—since the covenant did not yet exist! Therefore, it is hugely significant that Abraham was said to fulfill the necessary condition for justification and the promises of God by God even before he was circumcised and even before God commanded him to be circumcised in Genesis 17—and even before God gave the Mosaic Covenant to the Jewish people.

By the way, this is another way of saying what Paul will make more explicit in Romans 7, that there is nothing wrong with the Mosaic Covenant. The problem is sin, and the necessary condition for solving the problem of sin is belief from a changed inwardness that becomes accounted to a sinner as justification which will eventually result in receiving the promises of God.

¹⁰⁷ ὁ γὰρ νόμος ὁρῆν κατεργάζεται – Is Paul now shifting slightly and stating that part of the purpose of the Mosaic Covenant is to make the Jews (and Gentiles who are paying attention to the Jews who should keep all God's commandments and do not) aware of God's wrath (and condemnation and destruction by extrapolation – cf. Romans 2:3-12) so that they turn to Him with genuine repentance and faith. This could be through a person's facing honestly into the depth of his sin through the 10th Commandment as Paul describes in Romans 7. Or it could be through the death of the animals who are sacrificed as an example of what the Jews deserve and that they intuit that points them to the Messiah whose death will do the same in order for him to qualify to be their eternal high priest and intercessor. Or it could be through God's later response to their disobedience by destroying the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah through the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Probably, Paul is referring to both the first and second options—that something like the 10th commandment makes them realize the depth of their sin and humbles them to the point of authentic repentance, and the animal sacrifices also point to their profound need for God's complete and eternal mercy and forgiveness.

In this paragraph Paul is adding the subject of inclusion, that Abraham's belief occurred apart from God's giving the Mosaic Covenant to only his physical descendants, the Jews, while the later Jews will follow the Mosaic Covenant and will include Abraham-like belief so as to obtain justification and eventually the promises of God. This could be said the other way too, that they will believe God as Abraham did, thus having it accounted to them as justification, and they will include as a sign and confirming seal their following the Mosaic Covenant. But it is authentic belief that comes from a changed inwardness that is the key to acquiring God's blessings.

Thus, Paul draws the obvious inference from Genesis 15:6 and its preceding Exodus 20 and God's making the Mosaic Covenant with the Jews by five hundred years that Abraham's belief that is mentioned in the first passage would mean nothing if God considered the foundational requirement and condition for the Jews (and all sinful human beings, including Gentiles) that they obey the Mosaic Covenant, even with authentic belief, in order to acquire the fulfillment of His promises of participating both in the "great nation" of Israel as well as in eternal life which will come to both believing Jews and Gentiles.

¹⁰⁸ οὐ δὲ οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος οὐδὲ παράβασις – Paul is saying, take away the Mosaic Covenant, and there is no explicit delineation of sin and sacrifice on which to focus one's attention and no wrath of God that comes from the inner reality of sin like that of violating the commandment not to "covet" or have a strong, sinful desire that may or may not result in an outward sinful action. And this in this context of Romans 4 is within the context of Paul's making the vital point that Abraham found justification apart from the Mosaic Covenant which has been and continues to be the focus of erroneous Judaism. In other words, take away the Mosaic Covenant, and what do you have? Justification by inner belief and faith from a changed heart—which will certainly result in receiving the fulfillment of God's promises and all His blessings!!

Therefore, a sinner is not left with just an awareness of the depth of his sin (as happens with something like the 10th Commandment—cf. Romans 7) with no viable solution, just the obvious threat of God's wrath, condemnation, and destruction. But also take away the Mosaic Covenant and place a statement of truth before a sinful human being so that this person believes this truth, and what do you have? You have justification and God's blessings of the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham. In other words, a sinner is left with God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 and the statement in Genesis 15:6 to the effect that he found justification, forgiveness, participation in the "great nation" of Genesis 12, and ultimately eternal life through belief. In other words, remove from the Bible the whole section which the Jews emphasize and you still have enough to gain God's blessings and promises, because you have the Abrahamic Covenant and Abraham's belief that is all that must be imitated to render a person blessed by God!

All this would be quite a shock to any Jew who focuses on Moses and his covenant and not on Abraham and the actual predictions of the Messiah in the OT.

¹⁰⁹ Διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ πίστεως, ἵνα κατὰ χάριν, εἰς τὸ εἶναι βεβαίαν τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν παντὶ τῷ σπέρματι, οὐ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ νόμου μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ ἐκ πίστεως Ἀβραάμ, ὅς ἐστιν πατὴρ πάντων ἡμῶν – These next few verses cement the fact that Abraham, and therefore any Jew or Gentile who comes after him in history, will find that the promises of God are fulfilled because of an

inward change by the Spirit of God and authentic belief (and obedience) that results. This will be for the Jew who is following the Mosaic Covenant and, by extrapolation, for the Gentile who has only authentic faith and belief.

Paul has been arguing that forgiveness, belief, and grace all go together and that they were found to be true in Abraham five hundred years before the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, these are true for the Jew who has these in the midst of properly obeying the Mosaic Covenant through authentic belief in imitation of Abraham (and for the Gentile who has nothing to do with the Mosaic Covenant and yet has authentic belief in imitation of Abraham). Here is the inclusion that Paul has been emphasizing—that authentic belief in a Jew properly includes the Mosaic Covenant (as a sign and confirming seal of his belief), while the opposite is true also, that a Jew's following the Mosaic Covenant must include authentic belief in order for him to obtain the fulfillment of God's promises in Genesis 12:1-3. Consequently, the authentic belief of Abraham came through the inner work of God's grace (and His Spirit – cf. Romans 2:28-29), and the same is true for believing Jews who are seeking to obey the Mosaic Covenant and for believing Gentiles who have no obligation to this Covenant. Faith is a gift of God to sinners.

Paul says that this makes Abraham the father of all believers, regardless of their ethnic origin, which is in accordance with what God states in Genesis 17:5, even if in this statement God is referring to Jewish descendants as the “many peoples.” The fact that God by His grace produces authentic belief in many Jewish people implies that He does the same for any Gentile who will receive the fulfillment of His blessings—again because Abraham found justification by his belief and not by his religious performance of the Mosaic Covenant which came five hundred years later.

Indeed, God's gracious and sovereign, independent choice to change people inwardly and save them from His wrath and destruction through Jesus' advocacy is what is at the heart of Paul's mind and message. This is what he said too in [Romans 3:24](#) “being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” And because justification comes about through authentic belief, then belief, justification, redemption, deliverance, salvation, the “great nation,” blessings, the Kingdom of God, and eternal life all go together and never occur because of a sinner's religious (or even moral activities) that he does with a mind to make himself worthy of God's blessings—whether through the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant or through the requirements invented by Christians. Paul is saying the same thing in [Romans 4:4](#) “Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.”

Notice that Paul uses the relative clause regarding Abraham, “who is the father of us all.” He may be referring to only “us all” Jews who have and demonstrate authentic belief. But even if this narrow connotation is his meaning, it is still true that it is grace and God's inner work that produces authentic faith that is accounted as justification that leads to the “great nation” and to eternal life for both Jews and Gentiles. All these become his spiritual descendants of sorts because they exhibit an authentic belief in God's truth, especially now the truth of Jesus as the Messiah. Jewish believers, those who come from a foundation of having been exposed to and following the Jewish Mosaic Covenant, and Gentile believers, those who have likewise acquired a belief similar to Abraham's, both have their belief as a result of God's grace. Thus Paul would certainly call Abraham the spiritual “father” of them all. They are thinking, believing, and acting like Abraham, who himself never considered that he had to follow the Mosaic Covenant (or even be circumcised since this came later than Genesis 15:6) or should earn God's blessings (cf. 4:4). His God-given belief would make these ideas just as foreign to him as they were to Paul and as they should for us.

Inheriting the cosmos/world, i.e., the restored Kingdom of Israel of Revelation 20 (that will ultimately lead to the eternal earth of Revelation 21), is by virtue of God's grace bringing about authentic belief in Jewish sinners (and in Gentile sinners). Because this is all true, the promise of eternal life comes to every one of the “descendants” of Abraham who are such by virtue of their being his physical descendants, the Jews, i.e., “the one[s] who is [are] such by virtue of the Covenant.” Paul means also that these Jews are authentic believers. And we also know that Abraham's “descendants” also include those who simply have “Abraham-like belief.” These are Gentile believers who have no obligation to the Mosaic Covenant.

Paul is also saying that because the inheritance of the future cosmos/world of Jesus' and Israel's “great nation” comes to people by the instrument of God's grace, this also means that the people of genuine belief are guaranteed to receive it. Once God's grace, His independent choice that results in His acting on behalf of people by changing them inwardly, begins its operation towards a particular individual, it does not stop until it accomplishes its goal of ushering this person into the eternal Kingdom of God. This is in spite of the fact that the person never makes himself worthy of God's working within him and for him. Therefore, the entire process that is based on God's grace ends up being one that is completely miraculous. The authentic believer NEVER DOES ANYTHING that impresses God and motivates Him to act on behalf of him, as if he deserves God's blessings and kindness. Instead, God is always lovingly, kindly, and faithfully acting towards him that will culminate in his obtaining eternal life and the Kingdom of God, first on this earth in the “great nation” and then on the new earth after this present realm is destroyed.

¹¹⁰ καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν τέθεικά σε – Paul further explains the fact that it is God's grace that saves sinners from his wrath by quoting Genesis 17:5 to the effect that it was and will be God and God alone who causes Abraham to become “the father of many nations.” There are two options for what God meant in Genesis 17:5—1) that Abraham will become the patriarch of a multitude of believing sinners, both Jews and Gentiles (in line with God's second promise in Genesis 12:1-3), or 2) that Abraham will become the patriarch of a multitude of believing Jews who will eventually enjoy the “great nation” of the first promise of Genesis 12:1-3.

I think that #2 is correct, so that Paul is using this statement by God to bolster the point that Abraham with his authentic belief which was accounted as justification would become the patriarch of believing Jews who would also become authentic believers like him and would obtain the fulfillment of God's promises as Abraham would. This is also how Paul continues in this context in vs. 17b-21. Nevertheless, Gentiles would join the believing Jews as they obtain and demonstrate the same kind of Abraham-like faith and belief in God.

Thus, it is God's miracle of grace that pulls this off, not Abraham's Mosaic Covenant keeping that does or even his circumcision according not Genesis 17. In other words, Abraham does not keep the Mosaic Covenant or even become circumcised as that which becomes the basis for people from every nation imitating his belief. The basis is God's sovereign, independent choice and His work through His Holy Spirit and grace that brings this about. God says, "I have established you...", not, "You have established yourself...", and the emphasis is on the "I".

Genesis 17:5 "No longer shall your name be called Abram [exalted father], but your name shall be Abraham [father of many]; for I have made [set, established] you the father of a multitude of nations (אֲבִרָם אֲבִרָהָם אֲבִרָהָם) (ὅτι πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν τέθεικά σε)."

It is possible that God mentions three different groups of people in Genesis 17:1-8—1) believers from all ethnic groups throughout the world (17:4,5), 2) Ishmael and his descendants plus Isaac and his descendants plus Esau and his descendants (17:6), and 3) Isaac and his descendants through Jacob only, i.e., not through Esau (17:7ff.). But I think that God means only the third option, Isaac and his descendants, in this whole passage. Therefore, the *καθὼς* here in Romans 4:17 identifies the relationship between what God was saying in Genesis 17:5 about Abraham and his physical descendants, the Jews, and what Paul is saying in this section. Just as God by His grace promised the physical/spiritual descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, He also is creating spiritual descendants of Abraham among the Jews (and, by extrapolation, the Gentiles).

This is in line with what God says to Jacob "when he came from Paddan-Aram and He blessed him" in **Genesis 35:11** "God also said to him, 'I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. 12 The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you.'"

The same with Jacob's statement to Joseph regarding his younger son Ephraim in **Genesis 48:19** "But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.'"

¹¹¹ κατέναντι οὐ ἐπίστευσεν θεοῦ τοῦ ζῳοποιούντος τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα – There are at least two options for what Paul means here –

1) Paul refers to the most extreme case of God's power, both raising physically dead people back to life and making things exist that do not yet exist, in order to emphasize not only how powerful God is but also how much it made sense for Abraham to trust God for His promise of a physical descendant through Sarah

2) Paul refers to God's powerful ability to make Sarah's dead womb alive with a baby and to make Isaac come into existence who did not yet exist to describe accurately exactly what Abraham's belief involved.

It seems that #2 is correct because Paul does not use the word "raise" with "the dead." Instead, after God had stated in Genesis 17:5 that He is the basis of Abraham's becoming "the father of many peoples," i.e., among many Jews where they will imitate his faith, Abraham went on to believe God for this in the same manner that he believed God in Genesis 15:6 that these same physical descendants, the Jews, would be as numerous as the stars of the heavens. Thus, Paul goes on to describe this situation. Abraham himself needed miraculous belief in God's performing the miracle of providing him with a son and physical descendants after him. Therefore, Paul describes God as He who grants "life" to Sarah's dead womb and who will make Isaac exist when he had not done so before. This description of God highlights how faithful and committed to Abraham He was in establishing him as the model of faith for the Jews and how miraculous Abraham's faith was. Thus, Abraham believed that this was exactly the kind of God who was making the promises to him. God can and did reverse the deadness of Sarah's womb, and God did make that which did not exist by bringing about the birth of Isaac.

¹¹² Ὃς παρ' ἐλπίδα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι ἐπίστευσεν εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι αὐτὸν πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν κατὰ τὸ εἰρημένον οὕτως ἔσται τὸ σπέρμα σου – Thus, Paul says that Abraham believed that God would fulfill His promise to bring about many spiritual descendants among the Jews—"against hope" and "on the basis of hope," which is to say, when Sarah's barrenness and Abraham's old age would not instill any hope in Abraham, and yet he was placing his hope in the transcendent creator, God who is the author of this whole story. And Abraham's belief was in line with his trusting God to fulfill His promise to grant him a son and physical descendants, who would also be spiritual descendants, as He had previously stated in Genesis 15:5, "Thus shall your descendants be."

This belief was in opposition to the obvious physical facts, that Sarah had been barren and was now too old to have a child, and (perhaps) he too was beyond the age of having a child. Thus, Abraham's situation looked hopeless except for the power and miraculous work of the transcendent author of all reality—God.

¹¹³ καὶ μὴ ἀσθενήσας τῇ πίστει κατενόησεν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα ἤδη νεκρωμένον, ἑκατονταετῆς που ὑπάρχων, καὶ τὴν νέκρωσιν τῆς μήτρας Σάρρας – Paul continues to point out the rather hopeless situation, physically speaking, which Abraham found himself in. He was too old to have a child, and Sarah was too barren to have a child. From a human standpoint, there was no way that God's promise of having physical descendants as numerous as the stars of the heavens (Genesis 15) and a multitude of them (Genesis 17) could happen. All that could happen was for them to die childless—or adopt someone who could become his heir (Genesis 15).

But Abraham did not let the physical limitations of their situation diminish his belief in God that God could perform a miracle and provide Sarah and him with their own son. Certainly, the possibility of God's promise of a son looked altogether dim and non-existent when he considered the condition of Sarah's body in that she was past the age of child-bearing and, besides, had been barren up to this point in her life. Plus, he was too old to cause her to get pregnant. As a result, they both were close to death and past the age of child-bearing. So how could God provide them with a son? It would have to be only by a miracle, i.e., by grace!! Therefore, also by grace, Abraham did not weaken in his belief in this promise. Belief and miracle go hand in hand. But,

in the case of eternal life, it also involves waiting for God to perform a miracle until He grants undeserved mercy and forgiveness to a sinful human being who otherwise deserves death and destruction at the final judgment. This will definitely be a miracle!

¹¹⁴ εἰς δὲ τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ θεοῦ οὐ διεκρίθη τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ἀλλ' ἐνεδυναμώθη τῇ πίστει, δοὺς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ – In fact, rather than look at his situation strictly from a human and, therefore, hopeless perspective, Abraham grew stronger in his belief as time went along, especially, we can assume, after the covenantal ceremony of Genesis 15, where God made it clear that He was guaranteeing the fulfillment of His promises and would cause Abraham to meet His requirements of persevering in his belief. Thus, God's grace caused Abraham not to doubt with unbelief God's promise of a son and future, believing physical descendants. Instead, His grace cause him to believe Him for His promise, and it caused Abraham and Sarah to have a son miraculously since they were both beyond the age of childbearing and unable to have a child due to Sarah's barrenness.

The upshot of the statement in this verse is that a person's belief "increases" and strengthens over the course of his life, in spite of continued innate sinfulness which he displays and in spite of times of profound stress on his faith where it may appear especially to him as though he has none!! But as long as God's grace persists in working within the person, his belief is growing—by definition. This is clear even from Abraham's life, because he actually did not display such great belief in certain instances after God had declared him justified because of his belief in Genesis 15 (cf. Genesis 16 and what he did with Hagar & Genesis 20 and what he did in light of his fear of Abimelech, telling Sarah to lie). In this regard, Romans 7 and the dichotomy of God and sin within a person was at work in Abraham, too. He was not a morally perfect person, and no one else has been except Jesus as the very icon of God within the human race. Therefore, his belief was strengthened while he also gave glory to God by continuing to believe that He can perform whatever He declares that He will do.

¹¹⁵ καὶ πληροφορηθεὶς ὅτι ὁ ἐπηγγέλται δυνατός ἐστιν καὶ ποιῆσαι διὸ ὁ καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην – In addition to God's grace causing Abraham to believe God in a fully convincing way and causing Sarah and Abraham to have a son, there is also the fact that Abraham's grace-caused belief qualified him to stand before God as a future recipient of the "great nation" of Israel along with eternal forgiveness and life. Paul also points out that Abraham's belief ultimately was in God's power, i.e., His ability to provide him with a son miraculously, and, therefore, to fulfill the complete promise to him of many physical and believing descendants who would be super-numerous as Jews.

The way that Paul is telling the story of Abraham leads to his belief being accounted to him as having a standing before God that would end in participating in the "great nation" of Israel and eternal life long after the Genesis 15 event and Moses' comment in v. 6 to this effect. In other words, Paul is saying that every moment that Abraham believed and grew stronger in his belief (even in the midst of his ongoing sin) was a moment of God's accounting his belief to him as justification. To put it in Reformed terms, Abraham was justified by his belief every moment that he believed, thus showing that "justification by faith" is an ongoing condition of an inwardly changed human being in his relationship with God, and not just a one-time event. Therefore, Abraham was set apart first by God's inward work, i.e., salvation by sanctification, and then he believed God for the fulfillment of His promise of a physical heir which would lead to many more believing physical descendants, i.e., salvation by justification. And this must have been also in line with Abraham's believing God that people from all ethnic groups would imitate his faith and acquire the same blessings as he would obtain according to God's other promise (or promises) in Genesis 12:1-3.

¹¹⁶ Οὐκ ἐγράφη δὲ δι' αὐτὸν μόνον ὅτι ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ – Paul states that Moses, to the extent that he understood God's overall plans and purposes for human history, basically wrote Genesis for posterity. When he recorded in Genesis 15:6 that God accounted Abraham's belief to him as justification, it was not only to indicate this fact with respect to Abraham. It was also to reveal that all other sinful human beings acquire God's justification and the fulfillment of His promises through the same means. In other words, Moses did not write Genesis 15:6 about Abraham as though it were relevant to only Abraham. He wrote it for everyone who would read it so that they could realize that their belief in God's truth, whatever truth they were hearing at the moment like that which Abraham heard in Genesis 15 about his physical, believing descendants, qualified them to have this same standing before God whereby they would acquire the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham.

¹¹⁷ ἀλλὰ καὶ δι' ἡμᾶς, οἷς μέλλει λογιζεσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν ἐγείραντα Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἐκ νεκρῶν – Thus, fifteen hundred years after Moses wrote, Paul and his contemporary, believing Jews (and believing Gentiles), as they came in contact with the truth of Jesus as the Messiah, acquired the same standing before God as Abraham.

Therefore, they were not believing the exact same ideas as Abraham in Genesis 15:5 regarding the number of Abraham's physical descendants. Instead, they were believing the ideas regarding Jesus' as their offering and priest before God to obtain His eternal mercy. Thus, Moses' writing about Abraham illustrates the situation for each and every person with genuine belief who would read the story. Paul can see the benefit for him and his readers who have chosen to believe God just as Abraham did, that if He could grant life to Sarah's womb, He could also raise Jesus from the dead and thereby confirm that he qualified to be the Messiah. Then, Jesus will go on to intercede at the final judgment for rebellious human beings who are genuine believers. Jesus' resurrection was a miracle, and his advocacy for sinful human beings will be a miracle. Those who believe Jesus to be their advocate are thus counting on a future miracle and having to wait for God to perform it. But the waiting will be worth it!

¹¹⁸ ὃς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἡμῶν – As stated already, Paul speaks of Jesus as the one who offered himself to God on behalf of sinful human beings, in order to provide them with a means to obtain God's forgiveness and eternal life (cf. 3:23-26). Here, Paul puts it in terms of his being delivered (passive voice) up to death on account of our transgressions" and sins. And then Jesus was raised (also passive voice) from the dead "on account of our justification." Here the "our" may also refer to only Jews who become authentic believers like Abraham and who gain forgiveness from God and justification that will lead to their participation in His fulfilling His promises to Abraham. But then in the next verse of chapter 1, certainly he expands the 1st person plural to all believers, including those in Rome to whom he is writing.

Thus, God indicates that Jesus has qualified through his death to be the very means by which people can acquire His eternal

forgiveness, and a sinner's authentic belief in Jesus obtains for him a firm standing before God whereby he will be granted mercy and life through Jesus—along with participating in the “great nation” of Israel.

In this way, Paul finishes his argument that his “promotion of belief” (3:31) in no way invalidates the Jewish Torah and Mosaic Covenant. Instead, it supports and confirms them, so that anyone who wants the blessings of the Jewish Old Testament patriarch Abraham obtains them through belief in God's statements of truth just as Abraham did. Only now, the truth involves Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and priest before God because of the offering that he made to God by means of his death on the cross. And not only is a person's individual belief a miracle of God's grace (as Abraham's was), but that for which he is believing God, eternal life, will be a miracle also. Again, belief is a miracle and involves waiting for God to perform another miracle according to His promises to Abraham to make Israel a “great nation” and to grant life in this nation and eternal life to anyone who imitates his faith and belief.

The only other place where δικαίωσις is used is in **Romans 5:18** “Therefore, just as because of one transgression there was condemnation for all men, thus, also, in connection with one just punishment there is justification leading to life for all men (εἰς δικαίωσιν ζωῆς).” It seems most reasonable to assign the same meaning of justification to this word as to δικαιοσύνη.

¹¹⁹ Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως εἰρήνην ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Having argued so far that hopelessly sinful human beings, whether Abraham or anyone else, can obtain God's blessing of forgiveness and eternal life only by God's graciously changing them inwardly and causing them to believe His truth, whether that Abraham will have a son and his descendants will be numerous or that Jesus is the Messiah and propitiatory offering to God (cf. Romans 4 and 3:21-26 respectively), Paul articulates in 5:1-11 the fundamental implications of this forgiveness for those who now are believers in Jesus (and by extrapolation anyone who was a believer prior to Jesus' first appearance.

The “we” of this section refers to the “us, to whom [justification] is inevitable that it is accounted” in 4:24, i.e., those believers like Paul in the 1st century of the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, these ideas pertain to any person who becomes a believer in Christian history up to and during the time of Jesus' messianic kingdom in Israel (cf. Revelation 20).

The first implication of justification by belief is the fact that a forgiven person is at peace with God. In chapters 1 & 2, Paul explained that God will exhibit His anger and condemnation towards all human beings if they remain rebellious towards them during their entire lives. He implied that as sinners we are at war with God. However, when we start on the path towards complete forgiveness by virtue of God's inner work and our belief, we move into a new relationship with Him whereby we are at peace with Him. We become His friends, which means that we were His enemies. But God will never again be angry with believers, so that, even at the final judgment, we will sense God's kindness and compassion toward us. And all of this is because of Jesus' messianic role as propitiatory offering and advocate at the judgment.

¹²⁰ δι' οὗ καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχήκαμεν τῇ πίστει εἰς τὴν χάριν ταύτην ἐν ᾗ ἐστήκαμεν – In 3:24 Paul introduced the fact that God's grace is His internal instrument by which He chooses to act on behalf of sinful people who need His mercy in order to escape His condemnation and destruction. In line with this fact, Paul here comments that, it is because of Jesus and his role as eternal advocate before a God of justice, who naturally would condemn us, that authentic believers have gained permanent entrance into a state of God's grace, i.e., into His choosing to act in only a kind and forgiving way toward them from the beginning of their journey, when He changed their hearts (cf. Romans 2:28,29), right on into eternity. Not only does God continue causing people to believe His truth by His grace, but He will be merciful to them at the judgment and on into their existence in the newly created Kingdom of God by His grace also. In this way, Paul shows that Jesus and his death are an integral part of God's plan to grant eternal forgiveness and life to human beings.

¹²¹ καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ – We usually think of boasting or bragging as something negative, because it offends that sensibility within us that is more attracted to humility than to arrogance. However, the boasting that Paul is talking about here refers not to arrogance, but to humility. This is in conjunction with the idea of the personal significance, meaningfulness, and enjoyment in that which a person boasts. And in the case of this biblical boasting which Paul mentions, it is on the basis of what God is doing through His grace and mercy towards sinners, not because of what human beings accomplish in and of themselves. This is why in 5:11 Paul lists God as the final boast of authentic believers. We boast in God and not in ourselves. And we boast in what God is doing and will do on the basis of His choice of us to whom He grants the fulfillment of His promises. Therefore, our boasting is never in our human capability or achievements. It is in God's ability and faithfulness to finish the process which He has begun of rescuing us from His judgment and providing us with eternal life through the belief and obedience which He also supplies us.

In this case in 5:2, the humble, personal significance, meaningfulness, and enjoyment that we Christians experience is in the confident waiting for the glorious eternal life which will bring us joy and happiness beyond our imagination. Paul is simply saying that as authentic believers in Jesus as our Messiah, we humbly declare that our personal significance and worth as human beings in this world is completely wrapped up in waiting confidently for our wonderful experience in the Kingdom of God—that comes by God's grace so that we will neither earn nor acquire it by our own efforts. We choose to wait confidently for eternal life, but even our choice is a gift of God's grace. This is the second implication of being justified by belief.

God will finally transform us into morally perfect and immortal beings. And this will produce the greatest and most enjoyable feelings of well-being that it is possible to have within the created reality. Paul is saying that we authentic believers have the definite certainty that we will reach this goal—by God's grace.

Thus, the word “hope” refers not to something that is only possible, but actual. Typically, we “hope” for things that might possibly occur. But we are not 100% certain they will. Paul is talking about something that God guarantees—eternal life for authentic believers. Thus, like Abraham, who waited with belief and hope for what God had guaranteed him, a son, we wait with

belief and hope for what God has guaranteed us through another of His promises to Abraham, complete forgiveness and eternal life.

¹²² οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχώμεθα ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν, εἰδότες ὅτι ἡ θλίψις ὑπομονὴν κατεργάζεται – Here is the third implication of justification by belief. It is one thing to find personal significance now because of the glorious future as Paul talked about in the previous verse. It is another to find meaning and joy now in difficult and painful circumstances. The world urges us to find our significance in things they find great and glorious now—the size of our bank accounts, our accomplishments in business, our accomplishments in sports, our accomplishments in the arts, our status in society, our power in politics, etc. Instead, Paul states that a result of justification by faith is that we find our meaning and value in suffering, in the difficult circumstances of life that bring us heartache and pain. This is not because we love the pain, but because we look observe and enjoy God’s miraculous effects in the midst of our suffering. The first effect he mentions is the perseverance of our belief in God and in Jesus as the crucified Messiah. It is certainly natural that suffering causes us to question God’s goodness and love for us. How could a loving God allow His children to undergo extensive pain as demonstrated by human history and our own lives? Does He not seem more like an angry Father than a loving Father? But Paul is saying that God miraculously causes His children’s faith to endure all their pain and suffering. And this miracle then becomes the most encouraging evidence of not only God’s existence, but also His loving faithfulness and commitment to those whose hearts He has changed.

Therefore, it makes sense that the second use of ἡ θλίψις in this verse and the fact that it is singular refers not to the difficult circumstances that are causing suffering, but to the internal stress on a person’s belief that these circumstances are producing. We can imagine stress of such a great intensity that it crushes our belief in God and His promises. Paul is arguing that, BY VIRTUE OF GOD’S GRACE, He never allows stress to destroy an authentic believer’s inward orientation towards Him and the consequent belief in Him, Jesus, divine mercy, and eternal life. In other words, God’s grace is always there within a believer to make sure that his belief survives the ravages of hardship, pain, suffering, and stress.

¹²³ ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ δοκιμὴν, ἡ δὲ δοκιμὴ ἐλπίδα – In this verse Paul continues with the miraculous effects that God brings about for His children in the midst of our pain and suffering. First, as Paul stated in the previous verse, there is the perseverance of our belief by which we are justified before God. As stated above, we can easily think that in hard times, Christians will question God’s love to the extent that, if the pain is great enough, they will give up believing in His love, His goodness, and His eternal mercy and life. Indeed, we can imagine someone going so far as to despise God because of his suffering. However, God will miraculously produce by His grace persevering belief in authentic Christians. They will continue to count on God’s goodness, love, and mercy in spite of their suffering, even in the face of death. But only God can cause this kind of faith to persevere. Paul expects the reader to insert the assumed verb of κατεργάζεται from the previous statement. Thus, secondly, God will miraculously produce by His grace such a quality of belief that it will be clear evidence to the Christian himself that he has biblical and authentic faith. In other words, God uses affliction and His causing a person’s belief to endure it to attest to the fact that his faith is that of justification, i.e., that it is truly genuine. This is similar to the story of Abraham in Genesis 22 who was tested by God when He commanded him to sacrifice his son Isaac. When Abraham was willing to do so, God said, “Now I know that you believe in Me with genuine belief” (cf. Genesis 22:12-18). God persistently and consistently does the same with us. Thus, once God causes the person’s belief to endure, it provides adequate evidence and proof that his belief is genuinely biblical and authentic.

Thirdly, and again providing the assumed verb κατεργάζεται, God will miraculously move us believers on the evidence of our authentic belief to wait expectantly and confidently for that which God has guaranteed to us—eternal life. We Christians will do this instead of giving up on this ultimate promise of God to Abraham and his spiritual descendants. Because biblical belief is ultimately about trusting God for mercy and eternal life, the suffering person’s authentic belief includes this very element, even to the point where the confident expectation of eternal life may be the only thing that we have. We may have lost everything else in this world and be in the process of losing our lives, but we have our biblical belief and God’s promise of mercy and citizenship in the Kingdom of God. And so by God’s grace we hold on to this hope.

¹²⁴ ἡ δὲ ἐλπίς οὐ κατασχύνει, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου τοῦ δοθέντος ἡμῖν – What if we Christians wait and wait for God to fulfill His promise of eternal life, and He does something else to us, even condemns us for their sins? This obviously would be highly embarrassing for us. During the course of our lives we spoke confidently to ourselves and to the world that God will faithfully bless us with salvation and eternal life, because we trusted His scriptures to reveal the truth. But then He does something else instead. What fools we would be, the laughingstock of the rest of the world. But Paul comments that waiting expectantly for eternal life will not turn out to be a disappointing or embarrassing thing. It will not bring us shame. Because our confidence is grounded in the fact that God has loved each of us Christians by pouring out His Spirit in our hearts. It is the Spirit who keeps us going in our Christianity in the midst of life’s trials and tribulations. He causes our faith to persevere when it might seem as though life’s circumstances would crush it. And it is God within us who causes us to recognize the clear evidence of our faith when it perseveres and moves us to confidence and looking forward to the outcome of our lives—salvation! While Christians will find themselves afflicted and even persecuted in this world, they nevertheless will not be ashamed by the result—life in the eternal Kingdom of God with Jesus.

Thus, the Holy Spirit is not only a vital manner by which God loves each of us individually, but He also becomes an important component of God’s making us aware of just how much He loves us. He opens our minds and hearts to the truth of the perseverance of our faith and its eternal effect.

In the light of the incredible value of waiting expectantly for eternal life, it is most worthwhile for Christians to remember that we are now experiencing only a temporary existence, while the “glory of God” with its moral perfection and emotionally satisfying circumstances in the Kingdom of God will be eternal.

Paul could be talking about the content of hope, that eternal life will not be disappointing or embarrassing. But the above seems more likely.

¹²⁵ Ἐτι γὰρ Χριστὸς ὄντων ἡμῶν ἀσθενῶν ἔτι κατὰ καιρὸν ὑπὲρ ἀσεβῶν ἀπέθανεν – Now Paul explains another manner in which God has so loved us sinners. While we were still helpless in our ability to reconcile ourselves to God so as to avoid His anger and judgment, the Messiah Jesus died on behalf of those who remain not only helpless throughout their lives but also opposed to God.

When Paul and his fellow Christians were alive before Jesus even appeared on the scene around A.D. 27-30, they were morally weak to the extent that they were completely incapable in and of themselves to motivate God to grant them eternal mercy. They could not even muster up the proper belief to qualify for God's forgiveness. They were truly ungodly, which is to say that the Greek word ἀσεβῶν refers to the moral condition of human beings that cause them to be anti-God, that is, fundamentally against and opposed to the one true God, even if they think they are being obedient to Him by following the Mosaic Covenant.

Nevertheless, Jesus suffered death on the cross in order to qualify to be the priest and advocate before God of helpless, ungodly, but authentic believers. Paul and his fellow sinners had done nothing to warrant Jesus' dying for them in order to rescue them from God's condemnation and destruction.

¹²⁶ μόλις γὰρ ὑπὲρ δικαίου τις ἀποθανεῖται ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τάχα τις καὶ τολμᾷ ἀποθανεῖν – Paul says parenthetically that it certainly makes sense that someone would sacrifice his life for a morally perfect person who has actually earned the right to live rather than for a serial killer who deserves to die. Similarly, Paul is saying that it makes more sense that Jesus, the king of the universe, would die for morally perfect human beings rather than for those who have rebelled and remain rebellious against God. He is implying that Jesus' death must be looked at very carefully and seriously in order to grasp the situation in which our immoral condition places us. Jesus is our propitiatory offering which communicates that we deserve only death and destruction from God. Therefore, the profundity of the potential effect of our sin points to the profundity of God's and Jesus' actions on our behalf, as Paul will now go on to say.

¹²⁷ συνίστησιν δὲ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀγάπην εἰς ἡμᾶς ὁ θεός, ὅτι ἔτι ἀμαρτωλῶν ὄντων ἡμῶν Χριστὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανεν – Dying on behalf of sinners who deserve eternal death is truly an act of love. This is what God has demonstrated by requiring of the Messiah Jesus that he suffer crucifixion in order to qualify to intercede for us before God and obtain His mercy.

¹²⁸ πολλῷ οὖν μᾶλλον δικαιοθέντες νῦν ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ σωθисόμεθα δι' αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς ὀργῆς – Continuing with the idea of how much God has loved us by having Jesus' die for us, Paul now comments on the strong connection between his death and our rescue from God's anger, condemnation, and destruction. Indeed, if a sinner obtains a standing before God whereby he will receive His forgiveness, how much more certain will the sinner escape God's wrath and obtain this forgiveness. And it will all by means of Jesus' shedding his blood and dying on the cross. If his death brings justification and the promise of forgiveness, then his intercession on our behalf because he has died will all that much more insure that we are saved from God's wrath. Thus, we believing sinners obtain God's forgiveness through Jesus' having qualified by his death to be our advocate at the final judgment. And, thus, all the more reason we will escape God's anger which we deserve and which Paul first mentioned in Romans 1:18ff. This is why our "hope" (waiting confidently and expectantly) will not result in our being ashamed (cf. 5:5)—because it will be realized in our obtaining the joy and fulfillment of God's eternal mercy and life.

¹²⁹ εἰ γὰρ ἐχθροὶ ὄντες κατηλλάγημεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, πολλῷ μᾶλλον καταλλαγέμεν σωθисόμεθα ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ – Another way of saying that Jesus' death is a wonderful demonstration of God's love that makes our salvation certain is for Paul comment on how we begin this life as God's enemies, become His friends through Jesus' death and our belief, and end up acquiring the greatest gift which God can bestow on human beings, eternal life.

In other words, our greatest enemy is not Satan, or any human being who might even kill us. Our greatest enemy is God, and the only way to become His friends is to have His Son, the Messiah, reconcile us to Him by having died on the cross so that he qualified to be our advocate at the judgment. Our belief in Jesus has made us God's friends. He will never be disposed to get angry with us and destroy us. His only plan for us is eternal life. As Paul stated in the previous verse that justification by faith means that there is all the more reason that we will escape God's anger, so also becoming God's friends by having through Jesus' death and intercession means that there is all the more reason we will gain "his life," Jesus' existence of eternal life. We will live with him in the same condition as he—as eternal beings.

The difficult step for God has been to turn His enemies into His friend through Jesus' death. The easy step will be to grant His friends eternal life.

Another example of ἐν meaning into and not in – 1 Timothy 2:14, "Now, Adam was not deceived. While the wife was being deceived, he came [fell] into transgression."

¹³⁰ οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δι' οὗ νῦν τὴν καταλλαγὴν ἐλάβομεν – If God has loved us so much as demonstrated by Jesus' death and its effect for believers, it only makes sense that Paul say that he boasts in God, in view of the fact that Jesus fulfills the role that he does as savior. It is by means of Jesus, whom God gave the responsibility of dying on the cross, that we have changed from being God's enemies to being His friends with the guaranteed outcome of eternal salvation from God's wrath plus the guaranteed outcome of eternal life with Jesus.

Once we fully grasp how God is lovingly using Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah in our lives, then we can humbly embrace the personal significance, meaning, and joy that this brings us sinners in a world that cannot fulfill and satisfy us because of its moral corruption and commitment to worshiping the creation instead of the Creator.

It is also interesting that Paul ends this section with the concept of reconciliation (τὴν καταλλαγὴν) and says that we have now (νῦν) received it. For Paul, escaping that status of being God's enemy and becoming His friend is what human existence is all about.

In addition, Paul is ending this short section with the concept of boasting in God as the ultimate boast of an authentic believer. He had mentioned that the self-righteous and misguided Jew, who is even an ardent student of the OT, also boasts in God and in His Covenant. But this Jew does so without genuine belief (cf. 2:17,23). He is still God's enemy as Paul had been before his conversion on the road to Damascus.

¹³¹ Διὰ τοῦτο ὥσπερ δι' ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσῆλθεν καὶ διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διῆλθεν, ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον – In this section of 5:12-21, Paul uses three words (ἁμαρτία, παράβασις, παράπτωμα) to refer to human beings' sin that leads through judgment (κρίμα) to both condemnation (κατάκριμα) and eternal death (θάνατος), while he uses four words (χάρισμα, χάρις, δωρεά, δώρημα) to refer to God's solution of the just penalty exacted on Jesus (δικαίωμα) and its resultant justification (δικαιοσύνη, δικαίωσις) and eternal life (ζωή, ζωὴ αἰώνιος) to the problem of our sin. It is also theologically important that the opposite of sin is not goodness, but grace, because it takes God's grace to rescue us from His condemnation and the deserved eternal destruction and not our human effort of making ourselves worthy of His salvation.

Here Paul begins drawing another conclusion where he again wants to show the value and importance of Jesus the Messiah as the only acceptable propitiatory offering to God, and therefore the only acceptable priest before God (cf. Romans 3:25ff.). He is doing this by comparing two men, Adam and Jesus, and their effect on other human beings. Paul points out that Adam was the avenue by which evil and eternal death entered into the realm of human existence. In addition, he says that the problem of being condemned by God and suffering eternal destruction became the resultant experience of all human beings, simply because they all were sinful like Adam and deserved this kind of "death." However, Paul breaks off from finishing his sentence, whereby he would say that, "much more" certainly (πολλῷ μᾶλλον – cf. 5:9,10,15,17), Jesus was the avenue by which justification/forgiveness "entered into the world" and eternal life "entered through justification," and thus "eternal life spread to all men (who were graced by God with an inward change that made them authentic believers in truth)," because "all (with changed hearts) believed truth" and escaped God's condemnation and destruction.

The phrase ἐφ' ᾧ, so that it makes the most sense that the masculine (and probably not neuter) pronoun ᾧ refers to the masculine ὁ θάνατος just before it. Paul is saying that "in regard to death" all sinned, which is to say that death results from sin as a natural and legal result under the sovereign justice of God. In other words, sin deserves death, indeed eternal death. And since "all men" sinned after Adam, because this is simply the way God designed reality, then "all men" deserve "death."

¹³² ἄχρι γὰρ νόμου ἁμαρτία ἦν ἐν κόσμῳ, ἁμαρτία δὲ οὐκ ἐλλογεῖται μὴ ὄντος νόμου – Paul stops in the middle of his comparison of Adam and Jesus to comment that sin and rebellion against God with their consequence of eternal death do not need the written Torah, specifically the Mosaic Covenant and all its 613 individual and explicit commandments, to give them validity. In other words, just because people do not have God's explicit instructions about the nature of reality and God's explicit instructions and moral commandments to the Jews for how they should be His people, whereby someone can list exactly what they are doing wrong in comparison to stated commandments, neither are they excused from their sin against God and the eternal destruction that they deserve. The implication is that it is just as easy to recognize evil simply by being aware of one's own moral nature and ontology as well as observing human behavior, indeed our own inward and outward moral nature and behavior, as creatures who have a moral sense, created by God to be able to discern good from evil even without God's written explicit instructions about Himself and moral commandments. This is what Paul argued in Romans 1 and 2. Human beings are just evil and sinful, and they all know it!

¹³³ ἀλλὰ ἐβασιλευσεν ὁ θάνατος ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ μέχρι Μωϋσέως καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς μὴ ἁμαρτήσαντας ἐπὶ τῷ ὁμοιώματι τῆς παραβάσεως Ἀδὰμ ὃς ἐστὶν τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος – Paul continues in this parenthetical explanation and admits that Adam heard God's explicit instruction in the Garden of Eden—not to eat of the particular tree of the knowledge of good and evil (cf. Genesis 2). Therefore, it makes sense that God blamed him for his sin against Him. However, Paul also says that people to whom God never directly spoke and gave a specific commandment were held accountable for their evil and suffered destruction as a result of the justice and condemnation that He has the right to execute towards them—if he does not change their hearts and cause them to become authentic believers. In other words, not having any explicit instructions or commandments from God did not prevent people who lived between the time of Adam and Moses, who wrote down the first part of God's Torah, the Pentateuch of Genesis through Deuteronomy, from being subject to His judgment, condemnation, and destruction—because they were sinners and had the self-awareness of knowing so. Existentially, they could have repented and chosen to pursue righteousness, but for the most part they did not.

In addition, Adam, with the evil and death that spread to all other human beings because of his being the first to demonstrate his rebellion against God, was the model that God used to bring about Jesus and the effect that he has had on human beings. Adam was the prototype and model of human beings, while Jesus was made, in a sense, in the likeness of Adam and became the model and source of salvation for sinful human beings.

Again, the implication is that God has planted in every human being enough self-awareness and knowledge of morality not only to hold each one accountable, but also so that every person has a valid sense of needing to escape his sinfulness and obtain God's mercy (cf. Romans 1).

Having said this, we should consider that there are two options for "who is the prototype of what was to come"—1) Adam as an individual sinner was the model for Jesus as an individual righteous man and Messiah, or 2) Adam as an individual sinner was the model for all other sinful human beings who subsequently copied him by rebelling against God and, therefore, will suffer eternal death as a consequence if God does not extend His mercy to them.

However, I think that this little section is more about comparing Adam with Jesus. Therefore, it makes more sense as a result of the coherence of the paragraph to interpret Paul as referring to Jesus, who copied Adam, not by sinning, but by responding with

perfect obedience to God in such a way that he brought justification/forgiveness and eternal life to people. Just as Adam brought sin and eternal death into the arena of human existence, so Jesus brought justification and eternal life into the same arena.

παράβασις – This word, along with **παράπτωμα** in the next verse, seems to be completely synonymous with **ἁμαρτία** = sin. They all three refer to deviating/departing from and going outside the boundary of God’s moral standard and requirements for human beings. For example...

Romans 2:23 You who boast in the Covenant, are you dishonoring God through your violation of the Covenant (διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως τοῦ νόμου)?

Romans 4:15 In addition, the Covenant produces wrath. But where there is no Covenant, neither is there transgression (**παράβασις**).

¹³⁴ Ἄλλ’ οὐχ ὡς τὸ παράπτωμα, οὕτως καὶ τὸ χάρισμα· εἰ γὰρ τῷ τοῦ ἐνὸς παραπτώματι οἱ πολλοὶ ἀπέθανον, πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ δωρεὰ ἐν χάριτι τῇ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐπερίσσευσεν – Even though Adam and his rebellion against God were the model for Jesus and his obedience to God, the effect of Jesus is that much greater and certain for human beings who experience it. In this way, the “gracious gift” (**χάρισμα**) of God’s salvation of sinners through Jesus is “not like the transgression” (οὐχ ὡς τὸ παράπτωμα). In other words, the two are similar, but the great abundance of grace in the midst of the many sins of the many sinners goes far and beyond what the just punishment of God’s justice is towards sinners.

Thus, Paul now goes back to his main point in this section, that Adam as “one man” and Jesus as “one man” are not only similar in their actions and effects on mankind, but they are actually very much different too. Indeed, Jesus’ effect is “much more” (πολλῷ μᾶλλον – cf. 5:9,10,15,17). Thus, Paul is making an explicit comparison between the gift that God gives to human beings of His mercy and the “gift” that Adam gave to humanity through his rebellion against God. One the hand, the effect on all the rest of humanity of Adam’s evil and consequent death was truly abundant, because all men committed evil just as he did and came to deserve God’s measured condemnation and eternal destruction. On the other hand, the effect on humanity of God’s **work of grace** through Jesus the Messiah to rescue evil human beings from His eternal condemnation was even more abundant. Grace is the key element in God’s theology of saving people from His eternal destruction, and its effect is “much more” than the effect of the key element in God’s theology of destroying people, His justice, as Paul will go on to explain. This is why God’s work of grace through Jesus is “not like the transgression” of Adam, because it is “more” than God’s work of justice towards sinners.

I think that we can hear Paul’s concern that people will somehow think that they can do enough righteousness for God to make themselves worthy of His mercy and salvation—as was the case in the erroneous Judaism that he once held. Instead, the only thing that people receive from God that they can make themselves worthy of is His justice, condemnation, and punishment. We definitely earn God’s justice, but God graciously grants His mercy and salvation to those who can never earn them.

Romans 5:16 In addition, the free gift (τὸ δῶρημα) is not like that which happened through the one who sinned. On the one hand, there is judgment by virtue of one transgression that leads to condemnation. On the other hand, there is the gracious gift (**χάρισμα**) that arises out of many transgressions that would lead to a just penalty (δικαίωμα).

Romans 6:23 The wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift (**χάρισμα**) of God is eternal life in the Messiah Jesus our Lord.

Romans 11:29 because the gracious gifts (τὰ **χαρίσματα**) and calling of God are irrevocable.

Colossians 2:13 When you were dead in your transgressions (ἔν] τοῖς **παραπτώμασιν**) and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions.

The word **παράπτωμα** is used also in Romans 5:16,17,18 & 20.

Romans 5:17 Thus, if death ruled the day because of one man, because of the transgression of the one man, much more certainly those who receive the grace and the gift of justification that are in excess of the expected amount (τὴν περισσείαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης) shall rule in life because of the one man, Jesus the Messiah.

Romans 3:24 so that they are justified as a gift by means of His grace (τῇ αὐτοῦ **χάριτι**) in the light of the redemption by means of the Messiah Jesus.

¹³⁵ καὶ οὐχ ὡς δι’ ἐνὸς ἁμαρτήσαντος τὸ δῶρημα· τὸ μὲν γὰρ κρίμα ἐξ ἐνὸς εἰς κατάκριμα, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα ἐκ πολλῶν παραπτωμάτων εἰς δικαίωμα – Here is the “more abundant” nature of Jesus’ obedience to God in comparison to Adam’s disobedience of God.

The phrase ἐξ ἐνὸς could refer to either “the one who sinned,” i.e., Adam, or to “the one transgression” (**παράπτωμα**) since ἐνὸς is either masculine or neuter. I am inclined to think that Paul is contrasting the “judgment” (κρίμα) with the “gracious gift” (**χάρισμα**). The former can occur as a result of one sin, while the latter covers many sins. Therefore, he is referring to “the one transgression” and not to “the one sinner,” i.e., Adam.

In the case of Adam, all it took was for him to rebel against God explicitly once, and he deserved God’s wrath and eternal condemnation that would come through the “judgment” (κρίμα) of God. But in the case of God’s gift of salvation, it solves the problem for human beings even when their offenses against God are many. Justice that leads “to condemnation” (εἰς κατάκριμα) and eternal death requires only one violation of morality in order for this to happen. In contrast, mercy in the case of sinners who commit many sins covers their many violations of God’s moral commandments that would also lead to the just penalty of eternal condemnation. In other words, I think that δικαίωμα is not referring to justification but to the just penalty of sin, while the other words of δικαιοσύνη and δικαίωσις in this immediate section do refer to justification.

Thus, one sin can result in “the just penalty” (δικαίωμα) of eternal condemnation, and the same is certainly true of many sins.

The point that Paul is making is that God’s gracious gift of salvation is in light of the many sins of the people in the world. Consequently, God’s gift is in the light of many sins while His condemnation is in the light of only one sin—in the case of Adam and would be the same for all other sinful human beings. In this way, the free gift of justification, forgiveness, and eternal life

that by definition comes in the midst of many sins is “not like” God’s justice and eternal destruction that can result from either one sin or many sins.

Clearly, Paul wants to highlight and emphasize the abundant nature of grace and mercy in comparison to the singular nature of justice and condemnation, because he wants to pound into his readers’ heads just how loving and gracious God has been to them!

The word κατάκριμα occurs only here in the NT and in 5:18 and 8:1 –

Romans 5:18 Therefore, just as because of one transgression there was condemnation (κατάκριμα) for all men, thus, also, in connection with one just punishment there is justification leading to life for all men.

Romans 8:1 The result is that there is now no sentence of death/condemnation (κατάκριμα) for those who are in the Messiah Jesus,

¹³⁶ εἰ γὰρ τῷ τοῦ ἐνὸς παραπτώματι ὁ θάνατος ἐβασίλευσεν διὰ τοῦ ἐνός, πολλῶ μᾶλλον οἱ τὴν περισσεῖαν τῆς χάριτος καὶ τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης λαμβάνοντες ἐν ζωῇ βασιλεύσουσιν διὰ τοῦ ἐνός Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Continuing with the comparison and contrast of the idea of one vs. many, Paul says that, if condemnation in the form of eternal destruction is the measured, consequent result of even one violation of God’s moral commandments by human beings, then, “much more certainly,” eternal life is the unmeasured resulting effect of many violations of God’s moral commandments’ being forgiven by God through His grace and the free gift of justification that comes from the role of Jesus the Messiah who obeyed God specifically to be the means by which He would grant His grace and justification/forgiveness to people who did not deserve them. Therefore, the eternal death of destruction “ruled” evil people by being their potential destiny, while formerly evil people will “rule” in the eternal “life” of the Kingdom of God with the Messiah after they have received God’s grace, justification, forgiveness, mercy, and life.

Again, notice the various words of contrast in this verse— παραπτώματι, χάριτος, δωρεᾶς, δικαιοσύνης .

Romans 3:21ff. – here Paul first mentioned explicitly this salvation and forgiveness that comes as a gift of God according to His grace and through the Messiah.

Revelation 20:4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

¹³⁷ Ἄρα οὖν ὡς δι’ ἐνὸς παραπτώματος εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς κατάκριμα, οὕτως καὶ δι’ ἐνός δικαιώματος εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς δικαίωσιν ζωῆς – Now Paul mentions strictly a similarity between the two situations of Adam and Jesus. Both sin with its result of eternal death and forgiveness with its result of eternal life entered into the world through one human action of two individuals.

In the first case, Adam demonstrated his innate rebellion against God by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which deserved eternal death, so that all who similarly rebelled against God with one or more sinful actions also deserved eternal death. In the second case, Jesus demonstrated his innate perfect obedience to God by dying on the cross, thus with one action exhibiting the just punishment and penalty that all sinners deserve, so that all who believe in him obtain eternal mercy and life. Adam’s one act was followed by all other human beings’ emulating his rebellion, so that they all incurred the potential for God’s condemnation and eternal destruction. Jesus’s one act when he died on the cross made it possible for human beings to find justification and acquittal for their rebellion before God as a result of his advocacy at the judgment.

One act led to eternal condemnation for potentially all humanity who followed Adam’s example, and one act led to justification and eternal forgiveness for all humanity potentially. But we know that it will be only those who believe in Jesus as their Messiah and advocate who will obtain eternal mercy and life.

Again, I think that δικαίωματος in this verse refers to “just penalty,” indeed the just penalty of sin that Jesus displayed when he died on the cross. And δικαίωσιν in this verse refers to justification which people receive from God through belief in Jesus as the crucified Messiah. So “sin” (παραπτώματος) results in condemnation (κατάκριμα) and death, while the “just penalty” (δικαίωματος) of Jesus results in justification (δικαίωσιν) and life (ζωῆς).

¹³⁸ ὥσπερ γὰρ διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἐνός ἀνθρώπου ἁμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί, οὕτως καὶ διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἐνός δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί – Here are more contrasting terms to support Paul’s argument regarding the similarities and differences between Adam and Jesus. In line with what Paul said in v. 18, the disobedience (τῆς παρακοῆς) of the one act by Adam resulted in all human beings’ becoming sinful sinners like him (ἁμαρτωλοὶ), (because this is simply the way that God designed reality, that Adam and Eve’s descendants, except for Jesus, would be sinners like them, not through any physical causation, e.g., of their DNA, but through the manner that He tells their stories). Similarly, yet differently, the perfect obedience (τῆς ὑπακοῆς) of the one morally perfect act of Jesus (in contrast to Adam’s sinful act) results in as many human beings as God wants becoming justified (δίκαιοι) so that they stand to inherit His mercy and eternal kingdom.

Another possibility is that δίκαιοι could mean “righteous” and “morally perfect,” so that Paul is looking to the distant future when all authentic believers will become morally perfect like Jesus in the Kingdom of God. And this, too, seems to make sense as a contrast to the word ἁμαρτωλοὶ, which means sinners, i.e., morally imperfect people. But the previous context is more about what people become in this life through Adam’s sin and Jesus’ righteous act—sinners in the first case and justified in the second case. It is also about how people come to a point in their existences where they stand to inherit eternal life in contrast to how they come to a point in their life where they stand to incur God’s just penalty after condemnation.

¹³⁹ νόμος δὲ παρεῖσθην, ἵνα πλεονάσῃ τὸ παράπτωμα· οὐ δὲ ἐπλεόνασεν ἡ ἁμαρτία, ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν ἡ χάρις – Paul had said in 5:13 that “sin is definitely not charged to one’s account where there is no Covenant.” Now he develops this idea further by declaring that God’s purpose for giving the Mosaic Covenant to the Jews and, by implication, the written Torah through Moses

(and other authors) to the Jews and the rest of humanity is so that everyone's sin could be "charged to his account," thus "increasing" sin by virtue of its being that much more obvious and apparent. This is how I am interpreting "that sin increase." Paul is not saying that actual day to day sin within human beings and by human beings became greater when God gave the Torah and even the Mosaic Covenant to the Jews, because people were already so sinful to the extent that they all deserved God's condemnation and destruction (cf. Romans 1:18ff.). Therefore, he must mean something different, i.e., that their sin became that much more explicit, obvious, plain, clear, apparent, and beyond any doubt when the Torah and Mosaic Covenant came along and it was even written down by Moses.

It is like the laws of any country or political entity. Violation of them is not so clear if the laws are not written down and explicitly proclaimed to them. But once they are written and proclaimed, to break any one of them is now clear and obvious, so that someone's receiving a just penalty for violating a law is altogether much clearer and makes total sense—as long as the laws themselves are just and appropriate, i.e., in line with God's moral requirements. Plus, in the case of the Jews and the Mosaic Covenant, their violating the individual commandments of it did not reveal just that individual violation as an individual sin. Instead, it revealed their sinfulness, i.e., their natural born sinful nature that is the root of their moral problem before God and that results in His eternal condemnation and destruction of their existences.

Thus, God's gracious mercy trumps the increased exposure and revealing of sin and sinfulness that the Torah and Mosaic Covenant bring about. When God desires grace to win in the face of sin's being revealed by the Covenant, He looks to Jesus' qualifying to become sinners' high priest by dying on the cross and He changes the heart of a sinful Jew (or any other human being) and causes this person to believe the biblical message authentically and to seek His mercy, especially through the promise of the advocacy of the Messiah at the final judgment that speaks to their inner sinfulness which they cannot stop or correct.

Notice again the contrasting terms—*παράπτωμα*, *ἁμαρτία*, *χάρις*,

Galatians 3:19, "So why the Covenant? It was set forth because of transgressions up to the time that the 'seed' to whom the promise had been made arrived on the scene, having been ordained through divine theophanies by the hand of a mediator." Hebrews 7:11, "Therefore, if indeed complete confidence were through the Levitical priesthood (for the people have been given the Covenant on the basis of it), then why was there yet the need for a different priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not to be called according to the order of Aaron?"

¹⁴⁰ ἵνα ὥσπερ ἔβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ. οὕτως καὶ ἡ χάρις βασιλεύσῃ διὰ δικαιοσύνης εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν – Sin is a powerfully effective force in human beings that inextricably leads to their eternal "death" of condemnation and destruction. Fortunately, God's grace is even more effective, so that it causes a sinful human being to be subject to it with its outcome of eternal forgiveness and life—even in the face of all his evil actions being listed and charged to his account according to the instructions of the explicit and written Covenant from God. And Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that allowed him to qualify to be our advocate at the judgment and our king in eternity becomes the means by which grace can have this greater effect on many people with their many sins and evil actions, as Paul has been saying in 5:12-19—in contrast to the effect of God's justice on many people with simply their one evil action (if this were all they committed like Adam) for which they deserve His wrath and destruction.

Again, the important contrast here is not between sin and righteousness in a person, but between the sin in the person and the grace which God extends to him in the midst of his sin and sinfulness. And obviously God's grace includes Jesus and all that he has done and will do to provide sinful human beings with eternal salvation from God's wrath, condemnation, and death/destruction.

¹⁴¹ Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ. ἵνα ἡ χάρις πλεονάσῃ – Chapters 6-8 are Paul's defense against the accusation by Jews that the gospel provides no incentive to pursue morality because God is so profoundly merciful. In other words, if grace saves a sinner regardless of how much he has sinned and regardless of how much sin he is aware of, then grace cannot really motivate a person to pursue obedience to God. If anything, it motivates a person to sin even more in order that God may be even more gracious than if he does not sin. Therefore, grace as Paul teaches it makes it seem as though it operates no matter how a person lives after becoming aware of both his sin and God's grace.

Several rhetorical questions now come to mind for Paul. Because he is writing to Gentile Christians in Rome who have not had to confront objections to Christianity from rabbinic Jews, he provides them with a defense against a few questions that these latter people would raise. First, Paul has just made not only a rather negative comment about the central focus of rabbinic Jews in their relationship with God—the Torah with its Mosaic Covenant, but also a comment about the increase of grace, not justice, where rebellion against God increases, i.e., when, because of the explicit instructions of the Torah, an individual's evil actions can be easily listed on a piece of paper, for example, and the person becomes more aware of how many sins he has committed. In other words, ultimately, the Torah and the Mosaic Covenant are not the solution to the problem of evil and for people gaining God's eternal mercy. The solution comes from God "independently of the Torah" (cf. 3:21ff.)—through Jesus and his death and resurrection. And, while God displayed His justice plenty of times in the OT by punishing the Israelites for their disobedience, so that they should be motivated to shun evil in order to avoid His justice, it is actually more important to grasp the tremendous significance of His grace and mercy in the presence of massive evil and then be motivated to shun evil. This in no way provides a rationalization for evil, but should simply lead people to appreciate the massive graciousness of grace. Thus, grace, mercy, and morality become the key attractive elements of obedience to God instead of merely avoiding His justice and punishment described by the Torah and Mosaic Covenant.

In addition, Paul is implying that, by virtue of the fact that the Torah provides neither the promise of grace to ALL Jews down through history nor forgiveness at the final judgment through the advocacy of the Levitical priests, it can only reveal people's sinfulness and not provide the ultimate solution to it. Paul has also said that this increased awareness of evil on people's part in a

sense means that God provides them with more grace than they formerly believed was necessary (cf. 5:17).

We can see how a Jew, who is upset by Paul's taking the focus off the Torah and Mosaic Covenant as the solution to man's evil, would latch on to his statement of grace's increasing where there is more evil and asking Paul in a rather sarcastic tone, "Well, Paul, if God provides more grace through more evil, then why not just give Him even more opportunity to do what is marvelous and awesome of providing more grace by a person's continuing to pursue evil in his life?"

¹⁴² μὴ γένοιτο. οἵτινες ἀπεθάνομεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, πῶς ἔτι ζήσομεν ἐν αὐτῇ – Paul's answer to the rhetorical question from the hypothetical Jew is, how can death and life coexist? Either a person has one, or he has the other. And if immortality is associated with death, then it cannot be associated with life. Plus, indeed, immortality is associated with death, as "we" (in the 1st century Roman Empire), who have become authentic believers, have declared. We cannot find eternal life by extolling and promoting immortality, only by "dying to it" through acknowledging it for what it is, evil that is to be avoided.

¹⁴³ ἢ ἄγνοεῖτε ὅτι, ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν – Paul refers to the common baptismal ceremony as the point when people demonstrated their understanding of the significance of Jesus' death, that it pointed to their own morality depravity by which they deserved God's eternal condemnation. Thus, to be "baptized into his death" is for a person to recognize and appreciate that his sinfulness naturally deserves eternal condemnation and death as displayed by Jesus' dying on the cross and not with eternal life and God's forgiveness.

He will now go on to explain how an accurate view of one's water baptism involves an existential turning away from sin in a person's life.

¹⁴⁴ συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον, ἵνα ὥσπερ ἠγέρθη Χριστὸς ἐκ νεκρῶν διὰ τῆς δόξης τοῦ πατρὸς, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν – Paul is saying that "our" water baptism results in our also being "buried with Jesus," meaning that we have faced into our sin and become committed to avoiding it because it would naturally result in God's condemnation otherwise. This is to say that we acknowledge that we deserve only eternal destruction by God for our sinful and rebellious condition, which all was made manifest to us when Jesus died on the cross and was buried after he died. Similarly, Jesus then was raised from the dead into his new life with an immortal body from God. In accord with this part of Jesus' experience, Paul is saying that believers transition from their acknowledgment of their deserving eternal destruction on the basis of their sinfulness to their acquiring in the future a new life, an immortal and morally perfect one because of God's grace and the process of salvation in which they now find themselves.

Baptism's procedure of immersing people in water allows them to think of their immersing themselves in Jesus' perspective on reality, that he hated sin and man's sinfulness because of its eternally deadly effects, and he loved morality because of its eternal effects of life—obviously, when coupled with authentic belief in a sinful human being. Therefore, by grasping the advocacy aspect of the Messiah's death on behalf of sinful human beings and the eternal life aspect of his resurrection afterwards, people adopt a worldview whereby they see themselves as no longer committed fundamentally to evil as they had been before. Instead, they have a new perspective of heading towards eternal *life* and pursuing an existence of goodness and morality as Jesus had lived on earth. Paul is arguing that a person who has gone through this kind of intellectual change should not want to and will not want to pursue evil as a lifestyle, even if the Mosaic Covenant's main purpose is to increase the awareness of evil in people and even if God's grace provides complete forgiveness for any amount of sin or awareness of sin in their lives. Cf. Galatians 2:20.

¹⁴⁵ εἰ γὰρ σύμφωντοι γέγοναμεν τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἐσόμεθα – Paul repeats the point of vs. 3 & 4. If sinful human beings have come to recognize the destructive nature of their evil through Jesus' death, then they also come to recognize the eternal life producing nature of their belief through God's grace, such that they will possess the same kind of body as Jesus in his resurrection, one that is immortal and morally perfect.

To grasp theologically, logically, spiritually, and morally the significance of Jesus' death as a repudiation of sin and evil leads to grasping the significance of his resurrection as an affirmation of the goodness and morality that will be a key aspect of the eternal realm. A person then actually pursues that for which he ultimately hopes, moral perfection. In other words, there are necessary changes in a person's worldview and even inner motivations that come with God's causing someone to have a different inwardness from one enslaved to sin and that far reduces the necessity of having the Mosaic Covenant in mind in order to be motivated to obey God. In addition, this fact of the future destiny of an authentic believer puts the abundance of God's grace in perspective. Regardless of how much he has sinned, Jesus' death and God's grace make it completely unreasonable that a person would think of increasing His grace by increasing his sin. He is simply grateful for the grace and wants to live as much like Jesus as possible—with goodness, kindness, love, truth, patience, and forgiveness towards others.

¹⁴⁶ τοῦτο γινώσκοντες ὅτι ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη, ἵνα καταργητῇ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεῦν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ – Likening the sinful human being to a slave whose master is his sinfulness, Paul explains that this slave dies when he comes to grips with the significance of Jesus' death as representing what he deserves, so that he no longer is committed to obeying his immoral inclinations. By implication, he is a changed person, one who is now committed to morality—in spite of his continued immoral condition.

Besides having a certain future destiny of eternal moral perfection with Jesus, the believer has also been severed existentially from his slavery to sinfulness, not that his immoral condition has disappeared, but that it no longer dominates the course of his life. Thus, to grasp the significance of Jesus' death is to realize and claim that our fundamental desire in life is no longer to live in line with our sinfulness, which, in effect, means that we no longer are intellectually and spiritually tied to our sinfulness in such a way that we must always give in to it and live in rebellion against God.

¹⁴⁷ ὁ γὰρ ἀποθάνων δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας – The sinful person, who has authentically grasped the significance of Jesus' death and, thereby, repudiated evil and embraced authentic morality as Jesus did, has gone through an existential change inwardly from being dominated by evil whereby he stands to be being eternally forgiven by God and granted eternal life.

¹⁴⁸ εἰ δὲ ἀπεθάνομεν σὺν Χριστῷ, πιστεύομεν ὅτι καὶ συζήσομεν αὐτῷ – Because we Christians have undergone a process of renouncing evil as that which they fundamentally want in life, we believe also that we will inherit the eternal Kingdom of God that will be characterized by moral perfection.

¹⁴⁹ εἰδότες ὅτι Χριστὸς ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν οὐκέτι ἀποθνήσκει, θάνατος αὐτοῦ οὐκέτι κυριεύει – Jesus’ own transition from physical death to life meant that he would never have to die again. His experience within the created reality from that point on was going to be one of only life, even and especially in the eternal Kingdom of God. He had a mortal body before he died on the cross. He acquired an immortal body after his death on the cross when God resurrected him. As a result, Jesus will never have to die again. And neither will we after we have died and been resurrected! Because of Jesus and our faith in him.

By associating with Jesus and his perspective on both morality and immortality that resulted in death and resurrection for him, we Christians have a confidence that we, too, will not be dominated by either sin or its consequence of destruction and God’s condemnation in the eternal realm.

¹⁵⁰ ὁ γὰρ ἀπέθανεν, τῇ ἀμαρτίᾳ ἀπέθανεν ἐφάπαξ· ὁ δὲ ζῇ, ζῇ τῷ θεῷ – The one-timeness of Jesus’ experience with respect to death and resurrection means that he transitioned from one master of sorts to another. During his initial 30 or so years on earth, death on the cross always hung over his head. He was completely and perfectly subject to God as the morally perfect Messiah, but death still loomed in the distance—even for the future King of Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God. And his death was because of the sinfulness of all other human beings, that he might be a propitiatory offering and obtain God’s eternal mercy for them. However, after his resurrection, death no longer threatened him with its overtaking him as it had on the cross. Now he had his immortal body and would remain in the condition of having it forever. Thus, his being subject to God perfectly after his resurrection did not involve even the possibility of death. It involved only the possibility of life from God.

Thus, it’s a big deal that Jesus died and that died only once. God, the transcendent Story Teller, assigned to the Messiah the role that involves suffering and dying only once within created history. During his life, Jesus always looked forward to a future of strictly living and not dying. This is what it means for him to “live for God.” It is this once-ness of Jesus’ death that means also that Christians will face the dying and the possibility of God’s condemnation at the judgment only once. And, because Jesus is guaranteed to be their advocate at the judgment, they are guaranteed never having to face God’s judgment again once they enter into the eternal Kingdom of God, so that they are guaranteed to live morally perfectly like Jesus in his kingdom.

¹⁵¹ οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς εἶναι νεκροὺς μὲν τῇ ἀμαρτίᾳ ζῶντας δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – Similar to Jesus’ experience of transitioning from the inevitable threat of death on the cross to only eternal and immortal life, Christians should consider themselves as eventually going through the same kind experience of transitioning out of eternal death that they deserve because of their sinfulness to eternal and immortal life because of the effect that the Messiah will have on them by appealing to the Father for mercy on their behalf.

The effect of Jesus’ experience for the Christian is not only future in the eternal Kingdom of God, but it is also existential in the present realm. Similar to Jesus’ perspective now on the past and future as he “sits at the right hand of God” (Psalm 110:1, Hebrews 1:3, etc.), Paul’s Gentile Christian readers should pursue the kind of life that he leads now and that they will later, so that they look toward only obeying God and not pursuing evil for the rest of their existences as human beings—in both the present realm and the future realm. This perspective is the only logical outcome for his Gentile readers of understanding the significance of their association with Jesus as the Messiah, which further means that any thought of trying to increase God’s grace by increasing the evil in one’s life is nonsense.

¹⁵² Μὴ οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ – The Mosaic Covenant with its moral commandments and threats of punishment is not what Paul would use to motivate Christians to obey God. But this does not mean that he avoids commandments in the imperative mood altogether. Here he commands his Roman Christian readers to shun sin and pursue righteousness. Why? Because it only makes sense in the light of a person’s facing into his sin and its consequences by having looked at Jesus’ death on the cross and what it means—that we all deserve eternal death from God. He commands them not to let sin dominate them as it had before, which assumes now they have the desire to comply—even though they are not yet morally perfect and will continue to sin to some degree until God transforms when He resurrects them or lifts them off the earth when Jesus returns.

¹⁵³ μὴδὲ παριστάνετε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὅπλα ἀδικίας τῇ ἀμαρτίᾳ, ἀλλὰ παραστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ὥσει ἐκ νεκρῶν ζῶντας καὶ τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὅπλα δικαιοσύνης τῷ θεῷ – Another part of Paul’s command to his readers is to pursue morality as those who have gone through the existential transition of renouncing evil and embracing only biblical goodness as that which they fundamentally desire, but, of course, which they will obtain only after they go through the same transition that Jesus did from a mortal body to an immortal body. Paul wants them to make conscious decisions to do what is good and right before God rather than to do evil as they had before. This is the only way to live that makes sense in the light of their associating themselves with the Messiah, his death, and his resurrection.

¹⁵⁴ ἀμαρτία γὰρ ὑμῶν οὐ κυριεύσει· οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν – Paul now gets back explicitly to the point—that God’s grace and not the Mosaic Covenant *per se* is the proper motivator toward authentic goodness for the Christian. As he has said, the Covenant’s purpose is to increase a person’s awareness of his sin, while grace’s purpose is to do the same and motivate a person towards authentic goodness through considering what Jesus went through to rescue him from God’s eternal destruction. Indeed, Paul would make this comment about a person’s not being “under the Covenant” to Jewish Christians just as much he is to these Gentile Christians. In 5:20, he said that God introduced the Covenant into history in order to increase evil by virtue of it’s making more explicit their inherent sinfulness. Thus, every Christian, Jew or Gentile, is technically “under grace” and not “under the Covenant,” thus relativizing the importance of the Mosaic Covenant. Paul’s point is not to say to the Gentiles that they have no historical or earthly obligation to the moral commandments in the Covenant, but to say that all Christians cannot rely on

the Covenant alone to be the solution to their problem of sin and deserving God's eternal condemnation.

In other words, the Covenant alone was not intended to be God's tool of eternal grace and thus has neither power nor place in a person's life *per se* either to motivate people toward genuine goodness as sinful human beings or to solve their problem of being under God's condemnation. Only God's grace (according to the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant *as mentioned in the rest of the Torah*), working within human beings and their hearts, has the power and the place to do so—along of course with the intercession by the Messiah at the judgment through his death and resurrection (cf. Romans 3:21ff.). Consequently, by being those who are characterized by God's grace in the midst of their sinfulness, as opposed to being characterized by only their sinfulness in the face of only the Mosaic Covenant, Paul's Christian Gentile readers (and all Jewish believers) are no longer dominated by sin in their minds and their hearts. Their fundamental God-given desire now is to obey Him.

¹⁵⁵ τί οὖν; ἀμαρτήσωμεν, ὅτι οὐκ ἐσμὲν ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ χάριν; μὴ γένοιτο – In the previous section, Paul has relativized the Mosaic Covenant given to the Jews to the extent that it may seem that a person can ignore not only it, but also immorality—because, in the Jew's mind, the Covenant and morality are inextricably tied together. The Jew grew up knowing only the Covenant as the basis for his relationship with God, and to switch this basis to only the Messiah is quite a psychological leap. In other words, for the Jew, you cannot have morality without the Covenant, and you cannot have immorality explained and held to a person's account without the Covenant. [But cf. Romans 2:11-16 – **2:11** Indeed, there is no favoritism with God. **2:12** Consequently, those who do evil outside the Covenant will indeed suffer destruction outside the Covenant, and those who do evil in the midst of the Covenant will also be judged by the Covenant. **2:13** It is not the hearers of the Covenant who are declared uncondemned before God, but it is those who are doers of the Covenant who will be declared uncondemned—¹⁵⁵ **2:14** thus, whenever Gentiles, who do not have the Covenant, do “naturally” the things of the Covenant, these, who do not possess the Covenant, are in fact a Covenant unto themselves; **2:15** they demonstrate the effect of the Covenant written on their hearts, while their understanding bears witness to this and their thoughts alternately accuse or even defend them¹⁵⁵ **2:16** —especially on the day when God will judge the secrets of men, according to my good news, in light of the Messiah Jesus.]

Thus, Paul asks another rhetorical question, “Take away Covenant from its primary position as teacher and motivator towards morality, and does morality become an irrelevant concept under the gospel of grace and Messiah that Paul is teaching, so that committing immorality is ok as a Christian, especially because the free exercise by God of His grace is actually what is saving a person from eternal destruction?”

Paul's answer is an unequivocal no, as it was for the previous question.

If you take away the Mosaic Covenant from a Jew, with what is he left for understanding his relationship with God? Not much, especially if he has been taught that the Messiah, like the other teachers in Israel, would encourage the absolute necessity of basing his relationship with God on the Covenant. There is also the rest of OT Torah, but throughout it, the Mosaic Covenant is given primary attention, except perhaps for the Abrahamic promises. But the Abrahamic promises appear to lack any real teeth with respect to God's justice and mercy apart from the Mosaic Covenant. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:1, “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.” Thus, Paul seems to be ripping the entire theological and divine-relational rug out from underneath the Jews. For them, the Mosaic Covenant is not only key to defining their relationship with God, but it also is *the* prime motivation not to do evil, because it not only defines morality and exhorts the Jews to pursue it, but it also threatens them with God's retribution and justice if they disobey it. Take away the Covenant, and you psychologically take away the Jews' main reason for obedience to God.

Therefore, Paul just seemingly eliminated the Mosaic Covenant as an important factor for not only the Gentile Christians in Rome but also all Christians, including those among the Jews. However, Paul is not saying that the Covenant is not important, but that no Christian is “under” the Covenant and reliant upon it to solve his problem of sin so that he can receive God's eternal mercy. In addition, no Christian is “under” the Covenant as that which is necessary to motivate him to obey God. Consequently, it would be easy for a Jew to hear what Paul is saying and conclude that it is ok to pursue evil, because the Mosaic Covenant effectively does not exist for the Gentile Christian or even the Jewish Christian when it comes to obtaining God's eternal mercy and pursuing morality. Only Jesus and God's grace do.

Paul's argument so far has been that identifying with Jesus' death and resurrection is to agree with his evaluation of both sin and morality, that sin deserves death and should be avoided while morality is the only possible experience in the eternal Kingdom of God. Now, Paul will go on to provide another motivation for pursuing morality *apart from the Mosaic Covenant*—that a person's pursuit makes him either a slave of the outcome of abject and total evil, i.e., eternal condemnation and death, or a slave of the outcome of morality (in the midst of authentic belief), i.e., forgiveness and eternal life.

¹⁵⁶ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ὃ παριστάνετε ἑαυτοὺς δούλους εἰς ὑπακοήν. δοῦλοί ἐστε ὃ ὑπακούετε, ἤτοι ἀμαρτίας εἰς θάνατον ἢ ὑπακοῆς εἰς δικαιοσύνην – Here is Paul's answer and reason why not having the Mosaic Covenant as the central of focus of one's life does not allow a person to rationalize doing evil. It is because there is tremendous significance in the *kind of choices that a human being makes in regard to the moral direction and outcome of his life*, regardless of whether or not the Covenant is included in his thinking and motivation. If a person commits himself slavishly to pursuing sin that fundamentally characterizes the desires that arise from his sinfulness, i.e., if he “does evil because he is not under the Covenant but under grace,” then he will incur death = God's justice and eternal destruction. (Paul characterized humanity in Romans 1 as slaves of sin, whether or not they have ever been exposed to the Jewish scriptures. Thus, part of the implicit point here is that there is a definite inward transition that a person goes through when God's grace is directed towards him for the purpose of his eternal salvation.) However, if he commits himself slavishly to pursuing obedience to God, i.e., if he pursues goodness while not even thinking

about the Covenant (but because he is thinking about God's grace and Jesus' death as the greatest expression of love), then he will receive God's forgiveness with the result of eternal life and moral perfection—while it is assumed that the only way a person can genuinely pursue goodness is by God's grace!

Paul is declaring that it is possible to be enslaved to God apart from the written Covenant of the Jews, an idea that would be quite foreign and scandalous to a Jew who is steeped in typical Judaism. Cf. Romans 2:6-10, “2:6 [God] will pay back each man according to his deeds—2:7 on the one hand, eternal life to those who, in accordance with their perseverance in doing good, seek after glory and honor and immortality, 2:8 but, on the other hand, anger and fury to those who, out of selfish ambition, disobey the truth and obey unrighteousness. 2:9 God will pay back tribulation and anguish to everyone who pursues evil, to the Jew first and also to the Greek, 2:10 but glory and honor and shalom to everyone who pursues what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Here in Romans 6 Paul describes the “deeds” as an inward slavish commitment to either morality or sin.

¹⁵⁷ χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ ὅτι ἦτε δούλοι τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὑπηκούσατε δὲ ἐκ καρδίας εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδασκῆς – Paul is grateful that, based upon what he has heard about the Gentile Christians in Rome, that God has changed them inwardly by His grace, so that they now are not only committed to the NT message of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, but also are no longer existentially enslaved to evil to the extent that they are fundamentally rebellious against God. In fact, they are fundamentally desirous of obeying God (in the midst of their sinfulness). In other words, it is a person's inward response to the content of the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah, not the content of the written Covenant *per se*, that now becomes the indicating factor in his life as to whether or not he is obeying God. While it is important for Jews to recognize the *national* relevance of the Mosaic Covenant within the present realm, it is more important for both Jews and Gentiles to recognize the *eternal* relevance of the NT, apostolic message of Jesus as the Messiah. In fact, a proper or “biblical” response to this latter message can come from only a genuine change inwardly by God that also results in a person's no longer being dominated by his inherent evil, which, in turn, means that he can and will pursue goodness as the logical and spiritual outcome of this change.

¹⁵⁸ ἐλευθερωθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ – Paul is telling his Roman Christian readers that, when God changes a person inwardly so that he has authentic, biblical belief, the person is no longer trapped in the necessity to rebel against God as his fundamental spiritual condition. Instead, he is now “trapped” in the necessity to pursue morality in the midst of his sinfulness. This obviously does not mean that he can act morally perfectly, but that at least his desire is to pursue complete obedience to God. This is the existential transition that takes place for those inwardly changed by God—from a desire to ignore, reject, and disobey God to a desire to embrace, learn about, and obey Him.

¹⁵⁹ Ἀνθρώπινον λέγω διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν. ὥσπερ γὰρ παρεστήσατε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν δούλα τῇ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ καὶ τῇ ἀνομίᾳ εἰς τὴν ὁμοίαν, οὕτως νῦν παραστήσατε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν δούλα τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ εἰς ἁγιασμόν – Paul acknowledges that raw evil continues to be a part of the moral and spiritual structure of even a divinely and inwardly changed human being. Therefore, he goes on to speak in terms of his readers' actual experience as inwardly changed human beings. He states explicitly that their whole purpose and pursuit in life was evil before God changed them. Now, however, they have been transitioned inwardly as a result of the Holy Spirit's circumcising their hearts, so that, in line with this divine change, Paul exhorts them to commit themselves to pursuing goodness in order to be different from what they were before. In other words, when a person is trapped in sinfulness, his purpose in life is to disobey God and pursue evil. When he becomes “trapped” in authentic belief, his new purpose is to be different from his former life and pursue authentic obedience to God and goodness—and all this in spite of his ignorance of or lack of focus on the Mosaic Covenant.

¹⁶⁰ ὅτε γὰρ δούλοι ἦτε τῆς ἁμαρτίας, ἐλεύθεροι ἦτε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ – Paul is saying that, by definition, a completely sinful human being cannot properly obey God with genuine, biblical inwardness. This latter quality requires a miracle of God and His grace to bring it about. Thus, Paul says in a rather tongue in cheek manner that his Gentile Christian readers were “free” from pursuing genuine righteousness and morality while they were still enslaved completely to their immoral condition before God changed their inwardness. They were free in the sense that they could not, in and of themselves, change their minds to obey God from a circumcised heart, because they were enslaved to their sinfulness and innate rebellion against God.

¹⁶¹ τίνα οὖν καρπὸν εἶχετε τότε; ἐφ' οἷς νῦν ἐπαισχύνεσθε, τὸ γὰρ τέλος ἐκείνων θάνατος – In answering the question as to whether or not it makes sense to pursue evil when only God's grace is at play in a person's existence and not the Mosaic Covenant, Paul asks his Gentile Christian readers in Rome what the long-term benefit of their rebellion against God had been—especially in the light of the fact that the outcome of such a life is “death” = eternal condemnation and destruction from God. In other words, there was no good eternal benefit, even if there appeared to be temporary benefit on earth of satisfying their insatiable desires that were evil. The inference from this line of questioning is that pursuing sin, even though the Covenant is not occupying the major role in a Christian's life, makes no sense in the light of the eternal effects of abject evil, i.e., God's condemnation and destruction of the person. Again, cf. Romans 2:6-16.

¹⁶² νυνὶ δὲ ἐλευθερωθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας δουλωθέντες δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἔχετε τὸν καρπὸν ὑμῶν εἰς ἁγιασμόν, τὸ δὲ τέλος ζωὴν αἰώνιον – Now that the Gentile Christians in Rome have undergone the miraculous inward change of becoming authentic believers, the present, existential benefit in the temporary realm is that they are holy, i.e., different in their pursuit of morality from human beings who are only sinful with no inward change. In addition, the eternal benefit for these Christians is life forever and moral perfection in the Kingdom of God.

¹⁶³ τὰ γὰρ ὁψώνια τῆς ἁμαρτίας θάνατος, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν – Paul expresses the very simply principle that there are two possible outcomes to existence in the present realm. A person either earns the justice and condemnation of God that results in eternal destruction, or he is granted eternal life through God's grace and Jesus' advocacy at the final judgment. Again, the inference is that it is only logical that a person commit himself to making the kind of choices that head in the direction of the kind of life that he will lead in eternity, regardless of whether or not the Mosaic

Covenant is a part of his thinking in the midst of God's gracious and merciful working in his life now of facing him into the depth of his sin and the magnificence of Jesus' death by which he will be saved from God's wrath.

¹⁶⁴ Ἡ ἀγνοεῖτε, ἀδελφοί, γινώσκουσιν γὰρ νόμον λαλῶ, ὅτι ὁ νόμος κυριεύει τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐφ' ὅσον χρόνον ζῇ – Paul is now going to make a play on words with “life” and “death.” Clearly, the Mosaic Covenant is relevant for only a *living* Jew, even if it is not as relevant as Jesus the Messiah. This is to say that the Covenant is definitely a Jewish Covenant to which the Jews are historically and morally obligated to pay attention, even if they are believers in Jesus as the Messiah. Thus, Paul can say that, if a Jewish husband dies, his Jewish wife is no longer obligated to keep the Covenant by remaining married to him. (Parenthetically, it would be interesting to know if there have been or are Jews now who believe both in eternal life and that it will be necessary to continue to follow the Mosaic Covenant even after they die.)

Paul also assumes that he is speaking to Christians who are familiar with the Mosaic Covenant. Does this mean that his Gentile Christian readers have been exposed to the Torah and its Covenants, even though the Jews have been absent from Rome for eight years, or that, once they are confronted by returning Jews with the supposed need to follow the Mosaic Covenant, they will definitely become familiar with it? Probably more the latter, so that they can refer to his letter on an ongoing basis and learn better what he is communicating to them in it.

¹⁶⁵ ἢ γὰρ ὕπανδρος γυνὴ τῷ ζῶντι ἀνδρὶ δέδεται νόμῳ· ἐὰν δὲ ἀποθάνῃ ὁ ἀνὴρ, κατήρηται ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ἀνδρός – The example here is, if a Jewish husband dies, then his living widow is no longer obligated to be married to him. (I wonder how the Mormons interpret this passage?) The inference that Paul is making is that if a Jew dies, he is no longer obligated to the Covenant either, and Paul is going to exploit the concept of going through a death-like process when any person becomes a Christian.

¹⁶⁶ ἄρα οὖν ζῶντος τοῦ ἀνδρός μοιχαλὶς χρηματίζει ἐὰν γένηται ἀνδρὶ ἐτέρῳ· ἐὰν δὲ ἀποθάνῃ ὁ ἀνὴρ, ἐλευθέρα ἐστὶν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου, τοῦ μὴ εἶναι αὐτὴν μοιχαλίδα γενομένην ἀνδρὶ ἐτέρῳ – This principle of living Jews' being obligated to follow the Mosaic Covenant means that a wife who gives herself to another man besides her husband commits adultery. However, if her husband dies, then she is no longer married to him and is free to marry another man. She is released from the moral commandment within the Covenant that requires that she remain married to her husband. Again, the inference is that moral commandments pertain to “living” people, not to “dead” people.

¹⁶⁷ ὥστε, ἀδελφοί μου, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐθανατώθητε τῷ νόμῳ διὰ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς ἐτέρῳ, τῷ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγερθέντι, ἵνα καρποφορήσωμεν τῷ θεῷ – Like the situation of a husband who died, leaving his wife free to marry another man, the Gentile Christians in Rome have “died” to any claim that the Mosaic Covenant is their primary motivation toward morality and the solution to their need for forgiveness, because the Covenant alone cannot make them obey it properly. Their “death” is a death to sin in the sense that they have looked at the crucifixion of the Messiah as God's primary “message” of how rebellious towards Him they are with its eternal consequence of death and destruction. As a result of “hearing” God's message of the cross, these Gentile Christians have renounced any complete attraction to rebelling against God and trying to escape from it through their own human and inwardly immoral efforts (cf. Romans 6:2ff.). Instead, they have “married,” i.e., attached themselves to Jesus as the Messiah, in order that they may pursue morality in light of the fact that they will receive eternal mercy at the judgment through God's grace and through the Jesus' advocacy. Thus, their dying to the Covenant and marrying the Messiah occurred as a result of their identifying themselves with the Messiah's role of suffering death, when he so graphically and publicly displayed his attitude of repudiating sinfulness and then was raised from the dead by God as proof of his qualifying to be the eternal king and priest for people who believe in him. Cf. [Galatians 2:19](#) “For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. 20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. 21 “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”

¹⁶⁸ ὅτε γὰρ ἦμεν ἐν τῇ σαρκί, τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τὰ διὰ τοῦ νόμου ἐνηργεῖτο ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ἡμῶν, εἰς τὸ καρποφορῆσαι τῷ θανάτῳ – This is another statement by Paul to the effect that the Mosaic Covenant alone, without the active work of God's grace within a human being, is powerless to save anyone from God's condemnation. Any human being, including Paul and his fellow Jews, who so assiduously follows the Mosaic Covenant by thinking that it should be the focus of his relationship with God will find himself incurring only God's wrath, eternal condemnation, and the death which is destruction, not His mercy (cf. Romans 2:17ff.). This is because the person is ultimately relying on his sinful self, even if he mistakenly and in a self-deceiving manner has convinced himself that he is good enough to make himself worthy of God's granting him approval and eternal life. The inference from this, too, is that the person basically has no choice but to rely on his sinfulness, because he has not been changed inwardly and made to face into his slavish moral condition and renounce it. He is still a slave of sin.

¹⁶⁹ νυνὶ δὲ κατηργήθημεν ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου ἀποθανόντες ἐν ᾧ κατειχόμεθα, ὥστε δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς ἐν καινότητι πνεύματος καὶ οὐ παλαιότητι γράμματος – THE fundamental change for a biblically and inwardly changed person is that he commits himself to recognize his sinfulness and to denying that, because of it, he in any way can be self-pleasing to God, even now that he has become miraculously changed by God through the inward work of His Holy Spirit.

Sinfulness had unavoidably tied Paul and the Jews to eternal condemnation, which was by virtue of their being “tied” to the Mosaic Covenant and its call for the eternal condemnation of people who rebel against God. But now that Paul and others, on the basis of Jesus' death, have properly and inwardly renounced any claim to eternal life from God that they think could result from their own efforts through the Mosaic Covenant, they find themselves released from the call to condemnation that the Covenant makes towards them, and they also find themselves existentially slaves of the Spirit of God, not slaves of the Covenant. They have given up the Covenant, along with their self-efforts, as their means to eternal mercy for the benefit of possessing God Himself working within them inwardly as their means to mercy. Consequently, the Covenant by itself is no longer what even a believing Jew is counting on to solve the problem of his need for God's mercy. Instead, the true believer has gone through a kind

of death that releases him from eternal condemnation and trying to use his sinfulness the same way that a husband who dies releases his wife from trying to use him as her husband. This concept of salvation apart from the Covenant is what Paul also explained in Romans 3:21ff., “However, now, independently of the Covenant, the justification of God has been manifested, to which the Law and the Prophets bear witness...”

In other words, this death for a believer, releases him from trying to use the Covenant in the midst of his sinfulness to gain God’s favor and forgiveness. He no longer slavishly pursues obedience to the Covenant with only the “letter,” the written words, of the Covenant to help him in the midst of his sinfulness and natural human performance. Instead, the Spirit of God, who has inwardly changed him and continues to operate within him, makes him a slave of God with the motivation to pursue obedience to God with authentic belief. The Covenant by itself is just marks on paper (or stones, or papyrus), so that a person is left to himself and his natural human performance. But as such, he cannot use the words of the Covenant to please God. Only the Spirit of God’s inward work can cause a person to be pleasing, and the clue as mentioned in this letter for Paul as to whether or not someone has been inwardly changed is their commitment to the message that Jesus is the Messiah, even though this message also is just words. By saying “we,” Paul is indicating that all these comments pertain not only to Gentiles, who by definition are not morally obligated to the Jewish Mosaic Covenant, but also to Jews who are morally obligated to the historical relevance of the Covenant.¹⁷⁰ Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν· ὁ νόμος ἁμαρτία· μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔγνω· εἰ μὴ διὰ νόμου· τὴν τε γὰρ ἐπιθυμίαν οὐκ ᾔδειν εἰ μὴ ὁ νόμος ἔλεγεν· οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις – All this negative talk about the Mosaic Covenant with respect to obtaining God’s mercy and pursuing morality leads Paul to realize that it would be easy to get the impression that he thinks that the Covenant simply is a bad thing that God gave the Israelites. On the one hand, Paul has said that the Covenant is not the solution to sinfulness and people’s need for God’s eternal mercy. On the other hand, he has also said that it is not the best tool to motivate people toward morality. Therefore, Paul asks another obvious question, is he is saying, therefore, that the Mosaic Covenant is a bad thing? Absolutely not. He will go on to argue that the Mosaic Covenant itself is good. He has already said in 5:20-21 that it plays a very important role in a person’s life by exposing his sinfulness to him. He will repeat this in more detail that this is the case especially if a person looks at its commandments that address the inward desires of a human being, such as the Tenth Commandment, “You shall not covet (long for with an evil desire) your neighbor’s house...” (cf. what Paul said in Romans 5:20, “And the Covenant came in with the express purpose that sin [the awareness of sin] increase”).

Cf. Exodus 5:17, “You shall not covet (לֹא תַחְמֹךְ נָכָר) (οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις) your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” Thus, the word ἐπιθυμήσεις means to desire in an immoral and rebellious way, and the corresponding noun ἐπιθυμία means simply an immoral and rebellious desire, regardless of how strong it is. Thus, “lusts” is not really the best English translation of the plural noun ἐπιθυμῖαι (cf. Romans 6:12), because these desires can be for anything or anyone, even apart from sexual immorality. Everyone feels a desire for things and people. The problem is when these feelings are based upon a fundamental desire to rebel against God that comes from a person’s inherent sinfulness and sinfulness. Paul begins the answer to this question by stating that he did not come to a good, biblical understanding of the evil within him until he looked carefully at one specific verse in the Covenant that forbids people from even desiring things rebelliously. He will go on to say that what he discovered is that he uncontrollably desires things rebelliously, which means that he cannot personally avoid being condemned by God.

¹⁷¹ ἀφορμὴν δὲ λαβοῦσα ἡ ἁμαρτία διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς κατειργάσατο ἐν ἐμοὶ πᾶσαν ἐπιθυμίαν· χωρὶς γὰρ νόμου ἁμαρτία νεκρά – In Exodus 20:17 was the one commandment of the Mosaic Covenant that was saying to Paul that he should not have a rebellious element to even his inner desires for things and people. It is one thing not to perform an outward, immoral action according to the literal wording of the other commandments of the Covenant, e.g., “You shall not murder.” However, it is a whole another thing not to have an immoral desire according to the Tenth Commandment, “You shall not desire something rebelliously.” Thus, the Tenth Commandment of the Mosaic Covenant was requiring that Paul’s desires never cross the line from pure goodness to immorality as driven by his innate and inherent sinfulness, i.e., that he never become a slave of sin, which he already was. In other words, the Tenth Commandment was calling for him basically to be morally perfect, not only in his actions, but also in his inner life and desires, which was an impossible requirement with which to comply. Only Jesus had a morally perfect inner and outer life. Consequently, Paul’s sin and inherent sinfulness basically laughed at the commandment and caused him to have this exact element of rebellion in conjunction with his desires. There was no stopping his sinfulness from influencing his internal desires for people and things. So his desires became evil, because it was simply a part of who Paul was. In fact, rebellion was the fundamental moral condition within him, especially before he acquired a changed inwardness by means of a divine miracle. Therefore, before Paul acquired eyes to see what he was really like inside, the profundity of his sinfulness was not obvious to him. It lay dormant in a sense and was deceiving him into thinking that he was good, so that he was not as consciously and willingly aware of it as he needed to be in order to grasp fully the biblical message, even the concepts put forth by the Mosaic Covenant itself. It was as though his abject immoral condition was lying dead and dormant within him (or hiding behind his own self-created self-deception), while he blithely went on his way, thinking that he was being a good Jew who was properly obeying and pleasing God through the Mosaic Covenant.

¹⁷² ἐγὼ δὲ ἔζων χωρὶς νόμου ποτέ· ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς ἐντολῆς ἡ ἁμαρτία ἀνέζησεν – Thus, before he saw clearly just how sinful and sinful he was, Paul honestly thought that he was doing so well in following the Mosaic Covenant that he had acquired (even earned?) God’s favor, blessing, and forgiveness. He genuinely thought that God was duly impressed with his obedience and that he was actually a good person. However, when God started to perform and continued to perform His miracle on Paul of changing his heart, the high and impossible calling of the Tenth Commandment for any sinful human being finally hit home to him, and he realized that in the midst of his human obedience was actually rebellion against God so that he deserved His condemnation and

not His mercy. And not only did Paul realize how sinful he was, but also his immoral condition took on a new existence that revealed itself to Paul in such a way that it absolutely overwhelmed him and was proved to be completely out of his control—that only God’s grace was going to save him from His condemnation and from himself.

¹⁷³ ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπέθανον καὶ εὗρέθη μοι ἡ ἐντολὴ ἢ εἰς ζωὴν. αὕτη εἰς θάνατον – When Paul, through the lenses of his changed heart, saw clearly just how sinful and sinful he was in the face of the Tenth Commandment, he felt himself die before God, i.e., he felt himself being deserving of God’s eternal condemnation, not being worthy of His blessing of forgiveness and eternal life. In addition, he formerly had believed that the purpose of the Mosaic Covenant was to provide him with a sense of life and blessing on earth by virtue of his obedience and with eternal life later by his acquiring it (earning it?) through his obedience. But now he was realizing that the purpose of the Covenant was to enhance his realization of the eternal death that he deserved from God and could not escape simply through obeying it with the innate resources of his sinful and evil condition, i.e., through his natural human performance, because he was facing squarely into the requirements of the Covenant, which were too great for him to fulfill.

¹⁷⁴ ἡ γὰρ ἁμαρτία ἀφορμὴν λαβοῦσα διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς ἐξηπάτησέν με καὶ δι’ αὐτῆς ἀπέκτεινεν – By definition, human sinfulness and inherent sinfulness produces a self-deceiving element within the human psyche. It is in rebellion against God, who requires that the person admit to himself that he is in rebellion against Him. But, if the person desires to continue to rebel against God, then he has to deceive himself into thinking that he is not in rebellion against God and, therefore, is a good person. In other words, self-deception in regard to a person’s sin and sinfulness is all part of the strategy of sinfulness.

Thus, a person’s inherent rebellion against God includes a strong element of self-deception, in order to prevent the person from coming to grips with his rebellion and ceasing to be rebellious. Abject and complete rebellion, which is the case for naturally born human beings (except Jesus of Nazareth), does not want to cease to be rebellious. Obviously, the result of sinfulness’s self-deception is to place the person in a position of eventually incurring God’s justice and eternal death/condemnation at the final judgment, which will, nevertheless, not come as a surprise. This is in accord with what Paul stated in Romans 1, that every sinful human being knows deep down inside that he is accountable to God and condemned by God in his present immoral condition.

¹⁷⁵ ὥστε ὁ μὲν νόμος ἅγιος καὶ ἡ ἐντολὴ ἀγία καὶ δικαία καὶ ἀγαθὴ – Paul’s conclusion from this discussion is that the Mosaic Covenant is certainly not bad. Indeed, by virtue of the fact that it is calling for no hint of a rebellious element in a person’s inner desires, it is good. In addition, because the Covenant also reveals a person’s sin and sinfulness when the Tenth Commandment finally hits home to him in the midst of God’s miraculous inward work, it is doubly good for any human being. This is because, like Paul, everyone needs God’s eternal mercy and forgiveness and discovers just how much he is dependent solely on God’s grace for it—because his sin is out of his control at the most basic level of his being.

¹⁷⁶ Τὸ οὖν ἀγαθὸν ἐμοὶ ἐγένετο θάνατος; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ ἡ ἁμαρτία, ἵνα φανῇ ἁμαρτία, διὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μοι κατεργαζομένη θάνατον, ἵνα γένηται καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν ἁμαρτωλὸς ἡ ἁμαρτία διὰ τῆς ἐντολῆς – By claiming that his sin and sinfulness came to light through the Covenant and its Tenth Commandment in the midst of God’s miraculously changing him, it would be easy to think that Paul is saying that the Covenant actually *caused* his sinfulness to come alive, indeed, even *caused* him to rebel against God and incur God’s eternal condemnation and destruction. Thus, Paul asks another simple question, is this what he is saying? And his answer is, absolutely not. It certainly is one thing for Paul to be sinful and sinful at the innate level within him, and it is quite something too for him to be sinful in the face of the *good* commandment of the *good* Mosaic Covenant. Here was the Covenant calling for good, inner moral obedience to God, even supposedly leading to obedience based upon a changed and circumcised heart that exhibits authentic belief (cf. Deuteronomy 10:16ff.), and all Paul saw was inner evil leading to eternal death and destruction in the midst of the commandment. Thus, his sinfulness felt even more depraved in the light of the fact that a good, moral commandment was powerless to help him obey it, and, as he will go on to say, in the midst of a new fundamental desire to pursue morality instead of rebellion against God—a desire caused by the Spirit of God.

¹⁷⁷ Οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ νόμος πνευματικός ἐστιν, ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν – If Paul had the right stuff that corresponded exactly to the Covenant, which calls for authentic, inner moral obedience of belief to God, then Paul could obey it without God’s help and gain His blessing of eternal life. However, the situation is quite different. The Covenant is “spiritual,” meaning that it is true even though it is powerless to help him by virtue of its being simply words on a page that Paul could learn in his mind. But Paul is made of fleshly natural-born rebellion against God. Consequently, there is no sufficient match nor dynamic between Paul and the Covenant for him to be able to obey it properly, even though he can learn it intellectually.

Thus, Paul has come to realize that he is simply a sinful and sinful human being at his most innate level. He is trapped in his sinfulness, unless God performs a miracle inside of him. And even though God does perform this miracle inside him of changing his heart—which God did for Paul, he nevertheless continues to be plagued by his immoral, inner condition. It does not go away but remains there. What changes are his desires to obey God with humility and dependence on His grace, rather than thinking that he by himself is capable of obeying God in a pleasing manner.

The bottom line is, even though the Mosaic Covenant is both good by virtue of its being unadulterated truth, any human being (other than Jesus) who reads and learns the Covenant and then tries to follow it is evil, because all he has available to himself is his natural human performance, which is itself trapped in sin. Therefore, there is a radical moral discrepancy between the Covenant *per se* as God’s communiqué to mankind and mankind. Paul was not willing to embrace this difference (even though he “knew” it according to how he describes all human beings in Romans 1, i.e., that they all “know” it) as long as he was not inwardly changed by God and His grace. He had deceived himself into thinking that he was good according to the Covenant and worthy (in some sense, even if he would not say that he was earning it) of obtaining God’s ultimate blessing of eternal mercy and life!

¹⁷⁸ ὁ γὰρ καταργάζομαι οὐ γινώσκω οὐ γὰρ ὁ θέλω τοῦτο πράσσω, ἀλλ' ὁ μισῶ τοῦτο ποιῶ – Now Paul describes the confusing process of discovering his sinfulness in the light of his originally thinking that he was a good person and capable of sufficiently obeying God to combat any level of sin within him. As God's miracle began to work on him so that his insight into his sinfulness increased, Paul wanted to obey God properly by having even pure moral desires. He really recognized the importance and value of morality, indeed, even moral perfection, wanting to be and do only that which is moral according to the Tenth Commandment without any hint of evil. However, he found his desires constantly and inextricably either fully rebellious as his innate sinfulness took over his desires or his desires existed in the presence of his continued rebellion against God at the innate level, the very thing he also wanted to avoid. He despised his sinfulness and desperately wanted to avoid it—but he could not! In other words, his innate sinfulness kept rearing its ugly head, despite his fundamental desire for goodness which he was in the process of acquiring and maintaining through God's Spirit and transcendent work within him.

Paul had already mentioned this phenomenon with respect to Gentiles on whose hearts the Covenant's moral demands have been written with the result that their thoughts alternately accuse or even defend them (cf. Romans 2:14ff.), because they are authentic believers apart from being exposed to the explicit scriptures and instruction of God.

¹⁷⁹ εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ θέλω τοῦτο ποιῶ, σύμφημι τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι καλός – Thus, Paul, even more than when he was blind to the depth of his sinfulness, agreed with the Mosaic Covenant that it was calling him to do good, to obey God, and to avoid evil. However, now his understanding of the Covenant was even greater, because he had been pushed by God to grasp the full significance of the Tenth Commandment. Prior to the inner change that God had created, he had agreed with the Covenant that it was good. But now his agreement was at a whole another level that made his understanding of it truly correct.

¹⁸⁰ νυνὶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγὼ καταργάζομαι αὐτὸ ἀλλὰ ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἀμαρτία – Yet, Paul also realized that there was a reality that resided within him that was causing him to go in a moral and spiritual direction that he did not want to go—toward disobeying God. Thus, he became a kind of dichotomous person. On the one hand, he now had a fundamental and basic desire to perform authentic goodness that is not in the presence of sinfulness and moral rebellion (because of his more profound understanding of the Tenth Commandment). On the other hand, he was also still plagued at a deep level by his being trapped in an innate disobedience of God.

Therefore, I put quotation marks around the “I” in this verse to represent the part of Paul that truly wanted to do good in the face of his innate sinfulness. Prior to the effect of the commandment, he simply was not willing to grasp just how evil he was. After the commandment (and the work of the Spirit of God within him), he was. Thus, this “I” is a part of him that genuinely wants to do good, while he also says that his sinfulness unavoidable leads him to disobey God.

The upshot of what Paul is describing here is that a Christian, i.e., an authentic believer in God and Jesus as the Messiah, does not get rid of his innate sinfulness and sinfulness even though God has miraculously changed him inwardly. It can be said that his fundamental desire as a human being has been changed. He is truly a different person, and his moral life will change to a degree also, but he will not be able to be as good a person as he desires. His basic desire now as a human being is goodness, morality, and to be rescued from God's eternal condemnation through Jesus and His mercy. However, completely out of his control, his sinfulness and sinfulness still exist within him and, on a practical level, rears its ugly head on occasion, and perhaps more often than not, so that he ends up doing evil instead of good—even to a degree “against his wish” so to speak and definitely at an inner level. Therefore, he displays a fundamental desire for morality and appeals to God for His mercy, which he will receive at the final judgment, but he also displays his sinfulness, so that authentic anguish over his immorality, repentance and contrition in the light of it, and true effort to put at bay the effects of his ongoing sin also become a part of his experience (cf. Romans 8:23,24). Consequently, Paul feels caught between his newly acquired fundamental desire that persists throughout the rest of his life by God's powerfully causing it to do so (cf. 1 Peter 1:5) and his ongoing sinfulness with which he was born.

¹⁸¹ Οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ οἰκεῖ ἐν ἐμοί, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου, ἀγαθόν· τὸ γὰρ θέλειν παράκειται μοι, τὸ δὲ καταργάζεσθαι τὸ καλὸν οὐ – The result of this process for Paul was that he had to conclude that he cannot be a good person in and of himself. Indeed, he cannot really obey the Mosaic Covenant and be a morally good person as a Christian. Regardless of how much he would desire to do what is right in every moment of his life, it is simply not going to happen this side of eternity. Therefore, any goodness he does is always in the midst of his inherent sinfulness. As much as he had originally convinced himself that he was a good person, the best that he could do, before God had changed his heart, in his even “desiring” and “wanting” to obey God through the Mosaic Covenant was to do good outwardly and do evil both inwardly and outwardly—while deceiving himself into thinking that he was doing enough good to satisfy God, even earn God's favor. In addition, the best that he can do now, after God has changed his heart, in his “desiring” and “wanting” to do good and obey God (while seeing only a limited amount of success – cf. Romans 8) is also to do goodness as he desires sometimes but then do evil when his sinfulness overwhelms his whole being in the midst of his desire to do good.

While this is maddening on the one hand to a genuine believer, it is also what motivates him both to repentance and to obedience as he looks forward to an eternal life of moral perfection in the Kingdom of God.

¹⁸² οὐ γὰρ ὁ θέλω ποιῶ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ ὁ οὐ θέλω κακὸν τοῦτο πράσσω – Paul cannot stop himself from doing evil. He thought that he was in control enough of his moral condition and actions through his innate moral condition that he could truly do what is good. But he ended up being and doing nothing but evil even when he felt the sense of wanting to do good. His sin just overwhelmed him on occasion. Indeed, whether it be abject evil, that any human being can recognize, or masked evil, e.g., performing the Mosaic Covenant in a religious, Jewish community without authentic belief, his actions are still definitely evil at times that alert him to how out of control his sinfulness is. Yet, now he does not fundamentally desire to do evil as a spiritual effect of God's having performed a miraculous change within his inwardness that the Mosaic Covenant also calls, for example, acquiring a “circumcised heart.”

¹⁸³ εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ θέλω ἐγὼ τοῦτο ποιῶ, οὐκέτι ἐγὼ κατεργάζομαι αὐτὸ ἀλλὰ ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία – Here again as in v. 17 Paul explicitly mentions the kind of dichotomy that he sees within himself. One part of him wants to do good. But another part of him causes him to sin.

He speaks of his inherent sinfulness as though it is a separate person within him who is completely out of his control, but he also recognizes that being sinful is no longer what he truly wants to be. It is not “he.” In other words, his fundamental desire is what actually defines him. It did before God changed him inwardly when his desire was to hide from the depth of his sin, even in his religious and moral obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. But his fundamental desire now defines him as a person who ultimately wants to be good but who acknowledges wholeheartedly his sin that prevents him from obeying God sometimes even when he wants to.

Therefore, because his basic inclination is no longer to rebel against God, whatever element that resides within him that remains in rebellion against God, i.e., his sinfulness, is not who he really is. It is not what actually defines him biblically, spiritually, and eternally. His immorality is thus this other person within him. He observes himself desiring to follow the Tenth Commandment in the Mosaic Covenant as it actually commands him to do so, without any hint of rebellion against God, and yet something within him will not permit him to do so. Paul calls this something “the sin which indwells me.” And one of the troublesome aspects of his inward, immoral condition is that, regardless of how strong is his feeling toward authentic obedience to God, he cannot hold his immoral condition at bay. Thus, Paul’s sinfulness is actually out of his control and rears its ugly head without asking his permission. It just happens itself onto him, and there is nothing that he can do to stop it. The result is that Paul cannot make himself do good whenever he wants to do so. Regardless of how much he desires to do good, Paul must do evil at times, whether it is obvious evil (like murder) or religious evil (like attending synagogue (or church for Christians) without authentic belief). He does evil, first, all the time within this element of sinfulness that resides within him, and, second, whenever sinfulness “decides” to overwhelm him and follow its existential and practical bidding in his outward and inward choices of behavior, which could even be simply coveting or envying others in violation of the Tenth Commandment.

¹⁸⁴ εὐρίσκω ἄρα τὸν νόμον, τῷ θέλοντι ἐμοὶ ποιεῖν τὸ καλόν, ὅτι ἐμοὶ τὸ κακὸν παράκειται – As a result of the process of God’s inwardly changing him, Paul has now discovered the level of sinfulness and sinfulness that is inherently within him. He is utterly rebellious against God and cannot stop himself from sometimes doing what is evil, especially at the level of his desires where they are unrighteous. Yet, fortunately, his fundamental desire as a human being has changed from ignoring his unrighteous actions and desires to as not to repent of them genuinely. And this has been true even while he was performing the Mosaic Covenant and thought he was obeying God in an appropriate way. Now, he wants to obey God as a result of God’s inner miraculous work of grace, which leads him also to face into the sin within him that is out of his control. Thus, both his new basic desire and his sinfulness that “is present within” him will be a part of Paul’s experience from here on out until the end of his life. And he will have to take them into account constantly as long as he lives.

¹⁸⁵ συνήδομαι γὰρ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον – Particularly as a Jew who has grown up learning and pursuing obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, Paul has no problem agreeing with the goodness of its commandments, especially now that he has been changed inwardly by God and can appreciate more profoundly the life of morality and worship to which God has called the Jews through the Covenant. And this would include the Tenth Commandment as he has explained here in Chapter 7, which also reveals the depth of his own sinfulness and sinfulness as a result of the inner work of the Spirit of God.

¹⁸⁶ βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀντιστρατευόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοῦς μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου – Now that Paul has identified the inherent sinfulness within him at the level of his natural-born humanity and that exists alongside his new fundamental desire to obey God in a legitimate way, he also realizes that he is trapped into sometimes having to obey sin. He cannot escape it completely. Indeed, he wants to do what is moral and good according to the Mosaic Covenant. However, there is another reality, his sinfulness, that does not allow him to free himself completely from it.

He seems to identify a third reality, which I translate as “another set of instructions in my members.” But I think that this is the same as “the instructions of sin that are in my members.” In other words, sin “is warring against the Covenant in [Paul’s] mind,” and sin is “making [him] a prisoner of” it. This is how powerful sin still is in even a regenerate human being. It not only wars against his Spirit-given desire to do good. It makes him do evil sometimes when he would know in his mind that he prefers to do good. This is why Paul will go on in the next verse to express how miserable he is. His sin is out of his control and will require a new body in eternal life to free him completely from it.

As a result, to be a fundamentally changed human being results in neither complete and enduring moral perfection in the present realm, because his innate evil is always there within him. Indeed, it results in his obeying the instructions of sin even when he has a desire to do good. The best that a person can hope for in this life is to do good as a result of genuine belief while the goodness is inextricably alongside the evil of his sinfulness. Thus, his goodness is from his genuine belief while his fleshly natural-born humanity is still sinful and his sinful. Consequently, the NT message is not about rescuing people from all their evil in the present life but in the next and eternal life. In the meantime, Christians live with the biblical “hope” of entering into the eternal Kingdom of God and being transformed into morally perfect beings, while they remain “in their flesh” with “members” as innately evil as unbelievers. Cf. Romans 8:23-30, “8:23 And not only this, but we also, because we have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, while we wait confidently for our adoption, being released from our body. 8:24 We were saved on the basis of hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, because who waits expectantly for what he sees? 8:25 However, if we hope for what we do not see, we are waiting confidently for it with patient endurance. 8:26 And likewise, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, for we do not know what is necessary to pray, but the Spirit Himself pleads for us in the manner of our wordless groanings. 8:27 And He who carefully examines the hearts knows what are the mental intentions that come from the Spirit—that He pleads on behalf of

those who are holy in accordance to God. 8:28 Thus, we know for those who love God that everything works together for their good, for those who have been called according to His plan, 8:29 because those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren. 8:30 And those whom He predestined, these He also calls, and those whom He calls, these He also justifies, and those whom He justifies, these He also glorified.” As the bumper sticker says, “Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven.”

¹⁸⁷ Ταλαίπωρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος· τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου – In the midst of truly discovering the purpose of the biblical message in regard to eternal life, Paul finds himself absolutely miserable in his present condition with the fact of his continued sinfulness constantly staring him in the face. The existential reality of his dichotomous situation leaves him feeling utterly miserable about his inability to rescue himself from God’s condemnation. Thus, left to himself, even with the Mosaic Covenant’s help, Paul realizes that he is a lost cause and an eternally condemned human being before God. And being stuck in his depravity with nothing in and of himself to escape incurring God’s justice and eternal death leaves Paul emotionally and psychologically miserable. This is probably especially when he has spent his whole life up to this point counting on sufficiently impressing God with his obedience to the Mosaic Covenant—so as to earn God’s mercy and the outcome of eternal life (?). Yet, where Paul finds himself is exactly where all human beings should eventually find themselves in order to understand properly their inner immoral condition that can result only in God’s justice that they deserve if God does not miraculously grant them the proper condition of authentic belief by which they can escape His condemnation.

Thus, Paul asks a rather rhetorical question which is intended to have a sobering effect on his Gentile readers, who may be confronted with pressure from Jews’ returning to Rome to follow the Mosaic Covenant as the central focus of their relationship with God. Paul wants his readers to feel their own sinful misery in conjunction with his feeling his and then realize that only Jesus the Messiah and God’s grace, *not* the Mosaic Covenant and its powerless letters on stone or papyrus, can rescue them from God’s condemnation, i.e., “from this deadly body” which is leading them and all sinners towards God’s eternal death and destruction.

¹⁸⁸ χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. Ἄρα οὖν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ τῷ μὲν νοῦ δουλεύω νόμῳ θεοῦ τῇ δὲ σαρκὶ νόμῳ ἁμαρτίας – Certainly, Paul cannot thank himself for escaping God’s condemnation. The only person whom he can thank is God, because of what God has done through His grace by changing him inwardly and by Jesus’ death that has qualified him to be Paul’s intercessor at the final judgment. God will rescue Paul from not only his sinful body, but also eternal destruction when Jesus returns and raises the believing dead and lifts off the earth the believing living to transform them into immortal and morally perfect beings.

In the meantime, Paul will have to put up with a condition whereby he agrees with everything the OT (and by extrapolation the teaching of Jesus) instructs him. We remember that this includes the Tenth Commandment of the Mosaic Covenant in calling him not to have any evil desires and envy within him. However, Paul is still afflicted by his sinfulness that “instructs” him to do what is evil and leads him sometimes to rebel against God which is all highly discomfiting to him.

There are two Torahs or sets of instructions in us Christians who have studied our Bibles. One is that of God that includes the moral commandments of the Mosaic Covenant so that we genuinely want to obey God. The other is that of sin that makes us want to disobey God. Sometimes we do what is good and right. Sometimes we sin, and in the present realm we are certainly not in control of which of these two wins out at any moment. Nevertheless, we are called by God to strive to do what is good all the time. As a result of these two sets of instructions within Paul, he cries out, “I am one miserable person.” But fortunately eternal life will not involve this dichotomy for him or us. We will always and forever be morally perfect.

¹⁸⁹ Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – The bottom line of all this discussion about the Mosaic Covenant is that it does not provide a person with an escape from God’s eternal justice and condemnation through either outward good, religious, and moral obedience or the Levitical, sacrificial system. Instead, it is this other “method” that Paul has been describing and that he personally experienced through the inner work of the Spirit of God that faced him into not only his own ongoing and out of control sinfulness but also the significance of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah who suffered death on his behalf. Thus, Paul will go on to explain that it is those who associate themselves with Jesus through their belief in him, his role, and his perspective on reality who will not face God’s eternal justice and condemnation. Instead, they will encounter God’s eternal mercy. Indeed, Paul has been arguing this all along. For example, Romans 3:24, “so that they are justified as a gift by means of His grace in the light of the redemption that is in the Messiah Jesus.” Also, Romans 5:1, “Therefore, having been justified by belief, we have a peaceful relationship with God through our Lord Jesus the Messiah.”

¹⁹⁰ ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου – Paul has mentioned the Spirit of God three times so far in this letter. The first was in Romans 2:29 to the effect that biblical circumcision that leads to proper obedience of God is performed on the heart by God through the inner work of His Holy Spirit. Thus, inward circumcision is what God intended all along to be what He required. Yet, only He could perform it according to His sovereign will.

Then, in Romans 5:5 Paul states that God has poured out His love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, therefore also referring to the circumcision of the human heart by God that leads a sinful human to recognize the significance of God’s love through Jesus’ death—that he deserves God’s condemnation and eternal death and he receives God’s complete forgiveness through Jesus’ advocacy at the judgment.

Thirdly, in Romans 7:6, Paul says that Christians serve God in a completely new way—as a result of the inner work of the Holy Spirit, rather than through the sole object of the written commandments of the Mosaic Covenant where the only resource available is their own natural-born humanity and its constant sinfulness.

Now, in Romans 8:2, Paul is saying basically the same thing as all three of the previous passages. The fact that the Spirit of God

works by instructing sinners in the whole reality of their having a new, genuine desire to obey God while honestly facing into their continued sinfulness. This means that their existences will result in eternal life instead of in eternal death and condemnation. In other words, there is the fact that Jesus will rescue Christians from God's condemnation at the final judgment. There is also the fact of God's grace and miraculous work inside human beings. Addressing specifically his Gentile Christian readers in Rome, Paul is confirming the reality of God's having changed their inwardness. They no longer have a fundamental desire to rebel against God. Instead, they genuinely desire to obey Him and gain His mercy in the midst of their sinfulness that continues this side of eternity.

While Paul had said in 7:23 that he was a prisoner of his sin even as God was working within him to reveal his true moral condition to him, he can also say that, in a sense, he is not a prisoner of sin. He had been trapped on a road toward incurring God's anger and condemnation. However, now, even in the midst of continuing to be plagued by the inherent presence of his sinfulness, he is genuinely associated with the Messiah Jesus. Therefore, he is no longer on the road to this awful result. Instead, God has truly freed him from the outcome that sin, i.e., eternal condemnation and destruction—and this through both the inward work of the Spirit of God and the future mediating work of the crucified, risen, and ascended Jesus the Messiah. Paul is still enslaved to sin in his body and free from its eternal consequences of God's condemnation.

¹⁹¹ Τὸ γὰρ ἀδύνατον τοῦ νόμου ἐν ᾧ ἡσθένει διὰ τῆς σαρκός, ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί – There are two problems with the written Mosaic Covenant. With natural-born sinfulness as the only resource for obeying it, people fail to be obey it in order to be rescued from God's justice. In addition, a new and different priest besides the Levitical priests is required to intercede on behalf of human beings. Paul focuses on the first problem as he has been doing since chapter 7. Man is inherently evil and incapable in and of himself of obeying the Mosaic Covenant in a manner that is pleasing to God, i.e., with a changed heart. Instead, God uses His Spirit to provide miraculously the necessary inward resource that brings about authentic, biblical belief that even the Covenant requires (cf. [Deuteronomy 10:16](#) “So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.”). This is the important mechanism of changing a sinful human being that the Mosaic alone cannot accomplish, because it appeals to only a person's natural-born sinfulness. But now the belief is in Jesus as the crucified Messiah and not in the Mosaic Covenant, because Jesus with his personal propitiatory offering is the only proper means to obtaining God's mercy (cf. [Romans 3:25](#)).

Then Paul begins explaining the solution to the second problem, that of an adequate and qualified priest to mediate on behalf of sinners at the final judgment. Jesus fulfills this role as an authentic human being, albeit morally perfect and only “in the likeness of a sinful human being.” Without going into a lengthy explanation of how Jesus' death works to qualify him to be our mediator at the judgment (cf. [Hebrews](#)), Paul nevertheless states that he did experience the sentence of death from God that any normal sinner deserves and would experience. Thus, Jesus becomes the appropriate and only legitimate priest to intervene at the final judgment for evil people with genuine belief, i.e., for Christians and any authentic OT believers. Theoretically, God could have assigned Jesus the job of mediating without requiring that he die in order to do so. However, His overall purpose was for the Messiah to suffer, to demonstrate the judicial effects of man's sinfulness, and thereby through suffering to earn his position and responsibility of being our advocate at the judgment.

Alternative interpretation – through Jesus' death and propitiatory offering God condemned sin eventually to be destroyed rather than condemning the sinner to be destroyed.

¹⁹² ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ ἐν ἡμῖν τοῖς μὴ κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα – The Mosaic Covenant requires that sinners die for their sin. Jesus demonstrated this on the cross, specifically for those who appropriately understand this and face into their sin while believing that Jesus will rescue them from God's eternal condemnation.

Alternative interpretation – The Mosaic Covenant requires that sinners find a way to become forgiven by God in order to escape His condemnation and death, and it also requires that this way be through the circumcision of the heart (cf. [Deuteronomy 10:16](#) and [Deuteronomy 29:30](#)). While the Mosaic Covenant on its own cannot rescue people from God's condemnation because the only material it has to work with is human sin, nevertheless God provides the way through both Jesus' death so that he qualifies as high priest and through the Spirit's inward work in sinners to cause them to believe in Jesus' role as intercessor and advocate at the final judgment. Thus, Paul states that the fulfillment of the requirement of the Covenant of a changed heart is made possible through both Jesus' death and the Spirit's inward work.

In the immediate context of Jesus' death as a judicial demonstration of what sinners deserve, the first option makes more sense. Either way, the inference is that the purpose of both Jesus' death and the Holy Spirit's inward work was for God to show, first, what is the result for human beings when as sinners they disobey the Mosaic Covenant and, second, that people need a divinely caused inner change in order to take advantage of Jesus' death and advocacy at the final judgment. It is always these two linchpins of soteriological theology that the NT authors put forth for themselves and their readers as Paul says here—for those “who do not live according to [their] natural-born sinfulness but according to the Spirit.” He will now go on to explain this latter truth. If our morally perfect mediator suffered death as a demonstration of the extreme judicial consequences of our sinfulness, then, obviously, our sinfulness is a huge issue that can be dealt with by only God—both through His work within us of changing our spiritual orientation and through Jesus' advocacy at the judgment on the basis of his death on the cross.

Cf. [Romans 2:13](#) – Paul is describing here in 8:4 “those who are doers of the Covenant who will be declared uncondemned (2:13),” because they “guard the requirements of the Covenant (τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου)” (cf. [Romans 2:26](#)).

See other uses of δικαιῶμα and δικαιώματα in the NT that also mean “requirement” and “requirements” respectively.

¹⁹³ οἱ γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα ὄντες τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς φρονοῦσιν, οἱ δὲ κατὰ πνεῦμα τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος – Here Paul further explains what the requirement of the Covenant is—being inwardly inclined towards the things of God and morality with repentance by the Spirit of God. And that this requires the Spirit of God to bring this about.

The Greek word φρονέω can mean to think, or regard something. In this context, Paul is using the word to describe the overall issue of the two kinds of inwardness that are possible for human beings. One kind of inwardness is where they are compelled to “think” about the things of their natural-born sinfulness because they are completely enslaved to it. Thus, they are inextricably *inclined* toward sin, to follow and obey it wherever it may lead them. The other kind of inwardness is where people are compelled by the miraculous work of God to “think” about the things toward which God has now pointed them—authentic obedience that is based upon genuine belief, along with an honest regard for their immoral condition and need for God’s eternal mercy. Thus, these people are inextricably *inclined* toward pursuing obedience to God and appealing to Him for mercy in the midst of their ongoing sinfulness as described in chapter 7. Therefore, Paul is explaining further that people without God’s inward work of the Holy Spirit are fundamentally dependent solely on their natural-born humanity alone for everything they do, including obeying God, while those who have God’s inward work are different and fundamentally dependent on Him alone for how they live their lives.

¹⁹⁴ τὸ γὰρ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς θάνατος, τὸ δὲ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος ζωὴ καὶ εἰρήνη – To explain even further, the inward orientation of a sinful human being who lacks the inward work of God’s Spirit will only incur eternal death and condemnation, while the inward work of the Spirit of God causes a person to receive eternal life and the accompanying quality of eternal existence of moral, intellectual, psychological, and spiritual wholeness. Thus, the non-believer’s intellectual, psychological, and spiritual intentions exhibit a quality of eternal death even now before they receive it, while the believer’s intellectual, psychological, and spiritual intentions exhibit a quality of eternal life even now before they receive it. In other words, there is something about a person’s thoughts, words, attitudes, choices, and actions that reveal their eternal destiny, whichever it may be.

¹⁹⁵ διότι τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς ἔχθρα εἰς θεόν. τῷ γὰρ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ὑποτάσσεται, οὐδὲ γὰρ δύναται – Another apt way to describe the intentions of the unchanged sinful human being is that he is antagonistic and hostile toward God, and he displays his rejection of God by his refusal to listen to and follow God’s instructions as laid out for humanity in the biblical documents. Indeed, Paul says that this kind of person is completely incapable of following God’s instructions and obeying him, implying that people like the Pharisees and scribes of Jesus’ and Paul’s day were like this, while they appeared to be all about listening to God’s Torah and following it. Thus, the reason that a strictly sinful inward orientation results in eternal condemnation and death is because this orientation makes the person an abject hostile enemy of God. This person chooses to rebel against God, so that he will not and cannot submit to God’s teaching, including the Mosaic Covenant and its call to being a divinely and inwardly changed person, regardless of how much he thinks that he is obeying the it (like the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day). What a radical statement for Paul to make if he has religious Jews specifically in mind. But, of course, he was one and, therefore, knows exactly of what he speaks. As much as he thought that he was fully committed to submitting to God and His teaching through the Torah of the OT and the Mosaic Covenant, now he knows that he was hostile toward God and rebelling against Him. The clear and obvious evidence for this was his seeking to put followers of Jesus both in prison and to death. One cannot get too much more hostile toward God than executing followers of His Anointed One and Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

¹⁹⁶ οἱ δὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ὄντες θεῷ ἀρέσκει οὐ δύναται – Paul has been arguing all along that human beings are enslaved to immorality and live their lives in rebellion against God (cf. Romans 1), and it is only when God changes them inwardly can they obey God biblically.

Another way of saying this is that people who are characterized by only their innate sinfulness are completely incapable of pleasing God when they obey Him. They may try and try and try, and it may appear that they are being incredibly submissive and obedient to God, even spouting Bible verses and singing songs to Jesus—outwardly. However, they are actually rebelling against God, because they have not been inwardly changed by God. They are still evil because God has not given them the fundamental humility and desire to obey him that comes from only His Spirit.

¹⁹⁷ ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ἀλλὰ ἐν πνεύματι, εἴπερ πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν. εἰ δέ τις πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ οὐκ ἔχει, οὗτος οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτοῦ – Paul goes on to assure his Gentile, Roman Christian readers that they are not characterized strictly by their sin, as long as the Spirit of God is “in” them, i.e., is working within them, i.e., if the Holy Spirit has changed their inwardness and continues motivating them toward facing into their rebellion and sinfulness, while also moving them to appeal to God for mercy through the Messiah as their advocate. Here, “spirit of the Messiah” refers not to the Holy Spirit but to the kind of inwardness that Jesus himself had as the Messiah. Jesus clearly understood and acknowledged adequately the sinfulness of human beings. He likewise repudiated evil to the extent that proud and arrogant human beings felt it necessary to rid themselves of him by crucifying him rather than face into their own inherent evil. Paul is saying that those who associate correctly with the Messiah are those who have the same *kind* of inwardness that he had. Obviously, they cannot have the same *degree* of inwardness and be morally perfect this side of eternity, but at least they can genuinely love God, love morality, and hate evil—albeit while continuing to have the presence of their innate sinfulness within them as Paul describes in Romans 7.

¹⁹⁸ εἰ δὲ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν, τὸ μὲν σῶμα νεκρὸν διὰ ἁμαρτίαν τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωὴ διὰ δικαιοσύνην – Paul repeats an idea on which he has been focusing, that if the same kind of inwardness of the Messiah resides within a human being, then this person is characterized by a spiritual and moral dichotomy. On the one hand, moral evil is still so much a part of him that he deserves God’s eternal condemnation and death. On the other hand, his fundamental, spiritual orientation is toward goodness and morality so that, being in a state of justification, he will receive God’s complete forgiveness and eternal life. His “body” of sinfulness is leading him towards the death of eternal destruction while his spirit of changed inwardness, justification from God, and a new fundamental desire to obey God is leading him towards eternal life and mercy. And the latter is going to win in this competition!! This is as Paul says at the end of Romans 7 and the beginning of chapter 8.

¹⁹⁹ εἰ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ἐγείραντος τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ νεκρῶν οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὁ ἐγείρας Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ζῶποιήσει καὶ τὰ θνητὰ σώματα ὑμῶν διὰ τοῦ ἐνοικοῦντος αὐτοῦ πνεύματος ἐν ὑμῖν – Another way of describing the present and future state of

a true Christian is that now, in the present realm, the Spirit of God, i.e., the activity of God within the created reality that grabbed hold of Jesus' body and raised him from the dead, "dwells" in a Christian, grabbing hold of him and moving him toward solidified belief in, knowledge of, and understanding of truth. However, this same faithful and guaranteed activity of God, according to His promises and the purposes of the story that He is writing within the creation, will also make the "body" of a Christian alive in the eternal Kingdom of God in the same way that He made Jesus' body alive after his death. The bodies of sinners in the present realm are subject to and deserving of death in contrast to the future realm, where they will be indestructible—theologically speaking. God will simply not allow anything or anyone to introduce an element into the eternal Kingdom of God that will result in decay, death, and destruction for human beings.

Thus, Paul is simply saying that just as God raised Jesus from the dead for the sake of eternal life, God will raise Spirit-indwelling people from the dead for the sake of their eternal life.

²⁰⁰ Ἀρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ὀφείλεται ἔσμεν οὐ τῇ σαρκὶ τοῦ κατὰ σάρκα ζῆν – After describing the clear dichotomy of a Christian along with God's faithfulness to complete the process that He began when He first inwardly changed a sinful human being into an authentic "believer," Paul's conclusion is that authentic Christians have no moral obligation to pursue an earthly existence of evil where their innate, immoral condition naturally leads them. The inference of course is that they have a moral obligation toward genuine morality and belief in the truth of God that includes especially Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. This is supernaturally where God through His Spirit is leading them.

Thus, Paul drives home the point that he started at the end of chapter 5, that neither a Jew nor a Gentile needs the Mosaic Covenant in order to be motivated to obey God. All that is required, indeed a better motivator, is both God's inward change that moves a person to face into his innate evil and appeal to God for mercy and the Spirit's instruction to obey God's moral commandments. This is so that he may enter into the eternal Kingdom of God on the basis of God's grace and not on the basis of his own innate moral performance. In other words, it is grasping the profundity and significance of both God's grace and Jesus as the crucified Messiah that is more than enough motivation not to continue to do evil but, instead, to pursue goodness and obedience to God. Paul has said as much in Romans 6 also.

²⁰¹ εἰ γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα ζῆτε, μέλλετε ἀποθνήσκειν· εἰ δὲ πνεύματι τὰς πράξεις τοῦ σώματος θανατοῦτε, ζήσεσθε – Here we have another repetition of these fundamental ideas. If a person operates in this present realm as a human being according to his innate sinfulness, then the necessary and legal result of his existence will be God's condemnation and eternal death. But if a person repudiates the natural rebellious acts that originate in his body, i.e., as a result of his continued sinfulness, then he will gain eternal life via God's mercy. Thus, it is not that eternal life cannot be spoken of with reference to a person's efforts and actions, as though the only way to speak of it is in terms of God's grace and mercy. No, a person can be said to "get himself" eternal life by following the leading of the Spirit of God within him so that he pursues goodness, morality, and genuine repentance in the midst of his continued sinfulness. Of course, this person does not in any way *deserve* eternal life. It is simply that his fundamental desire, his choices, and his actions theologically align themselves with God and His purposes within him through the work of His Spirit. In other words, this person has the "spirit of the Messiah" (8:9), the same kind of perspective on reality that Jesus had, and he acts in such a way that he reaches out, spiritually speaking, to take hold of eternal life now through the inner work of the Spirit and later through Jesus' advocacy at the final judgment.

²⁰² ὅσοι γὰρ πνεύματι θεοῦ ἄγονται, οὗτοι υἱοὶ θεοῦ εἰσιν – Thus, Paul declares that people who are being motivated and moved by God's inward work of His Spirit can also be said to be "sons of God" and therefore people who can call God Father as the very source of their human existence and biblical belief/obedience. In other words, the children of God and, therefore, the sons of God are those Jews and Gentiles who are spiritually inclined toward God by virtue of His miraculous work within their hearts, not those who are attempting to follow the Torah and Mosaic Covenant in and of themselves, which, as Paul has been arguing, leaves them in a position of being God's enemies, not His "children."

²⁰³ οὐ γὰρ ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα δουλείας πάλιν εἰς φόβον ἀλλὰ ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα υἰοθεσίας ἐν ᾧ κρᾶζομεν· ἀββὰ ὁ πατήρ – Paul goes on to describe the relational benefits of God's miraculous inward change within a human being. He makes an interesting statement that seems to contradict what he said in 6:17-7:6 where he talked about Christians' being enslaved to morality and God. He says here in 8:15 that Christians are not enslaved, but he means enslaved to sin in such a way that the person is despairingly fearful of God's eternal condemnation (cf. 1 John 4:8 and Søren Kierkegaard's *The Sickness Unto Death*). Instead, the Christian's "slavery" to God so to speak can also be described as an "adoption" by God as His child. Thus, the genuine believer can call God "Father" and appeal to Him with loving and endearing terms, because this is how God views him—no longer as an enemy but as His son or daughter. If God is not one's "Father," then He is only a person's judge who will condemn and destroy him. Therefore, this is no small point that a sinner who is marked by the inward work of the Spirit of God can call God "Father" and cry to Him for assistance in persevering in faith during this lifetime.

In addition, nothing within the present realm—no circumstance or even choice or action on the part of the Christian—changes the familial characteristics of God's relationship with the Christian (cf. Romans 8:28-39). Another way to say this is that to be inwardly changed by God is to receive from God something completely different from a person's natural-born inwardness that can be identified by unavoidable obedience to sin and that also results in rightly being afraid of God's justice and condemnation, even if a person does not admit that he is afraid (cf. Romans 1). Instead, the inwardly changed person knows that he has been adopted by God as his Father to be His son or daughter, which then leads him/her to address God as "Father" in a loving and intimate way and without the fear of condemnation. There is certainly a sober concern in the Christian not to be cavalier about God's grace that is a kind of "fear," i.e., a deep, deep respect and reverence for God's justice and character, but there is not the abject despair that is inevitable for unchanged, sinful human beings.

²⁰⁴ αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν ὅτι ἐσμὲν τέκνα θεοῦ – In this way, the Spirit of God acts in conjunction with Christians' inwardness to reveal the fact that they are authentic believers. First, by addressing God as "Father" and the source of their existence and inward change that results in eternal salvation (8:15) and second, by sympathizing with Jesus in regard to the present, sinful realm while longing for eternal life (8:17,18), Christians demonstrate that they are in fact God's children.

Thus, the "children of God" are not defined by being physical descendants of Abraham who diligently follow the Mosaic Covenant and find their motivation to obey God strictly in the Torah and Mosaic Covenant, but by being inwardly changed by God through the work of His Spirit and finding their motivation to obey God on the basis of His faithful and promissory work within them through His Spirit and His work for their benefit through the death and advocacy of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Thus, both Jews and Gentiles who are authentic believers are considered to be God's children. This has been Paul's argument all along. Cf. Galatians 3:26, "For you are all sons of God through belief in the Messiah Jesus."

²⁰⁵ εἰ δὲ τέκνα, καὶ κληρονόμοι κληρονόμοι μὲν θεοῦ, συγκληρονόμοι δὲ Χριστοῦ, εἴπερ συμπάσχομεν ἵνα καὶ συνδοξασθῶμεν – It is natural to speak of an "inheritance" when one is also talking about "children" and their "Father." Even in the ANE, children inherited their parents' property at their death. In this case, the parent, i.e., God, does not die and cease to exist within the realm where the children inherit His property. Instead, God continues to live and, yet, provides His "children" who are authentic believers with access to His eternal property for which they will have a level of responsibility within it along with the most important "child of God," the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Nevertheless, the only way that sinful "children of God" can acquire the same eternal property of God that the Messiah does, the eternal Kingdom of God, is if they are willing to feel the same way about escaping this realm and entering into the eternal realm as Jesus did because they experience to some level the same negative responses of people who are hostile to God and the truth. Jesus certainly felt the way he did about the present realm because he experienced the pain and suffering of persecution even to the point of death on the cross. And he felt with those who suffered from their sin, disease, loss, and any other causes of suffering in the present realm. Therefore, our sympathizing with Jesus also involves our feeling the pain of our own human, sinful existence as followers of Jesus in the same manner and with the same kind of experiences that he had. Nevertheless, his goal was his glory in the eternal Kingdom of God, and our goal is our glory with him in the kingdom. Jesus understood the sinfulness of man because he was going to suffer death on their behalf. And he longed to finish this responsibility and acquire the glory of the Kingdom of God. We long to be rid of our sinfulness and acquire the same glory with him.

Cf. [Hebrews 12:2](#) fixing our eyes on Jesus, the leader and finisher of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Thus, the upshot of being a true child of God through the inward work of the Spirit is to be an heir of God's wonderful and fabulous property, which is first the restored Kingdom of Israel on this earth and then the new earth of the new creation of the eternal Kingdom of God, along with becoming morally perfect like God and His Messiah Jesus. This means also that a person inherits this kingdom as Jesus the Messiah does. However, there is a condition for obtaining this kingdom as a future possession. The person must be willing to experience the same kind of visceral reaction to sin and a deep longing for the Kingdom of God. This is what Jesus experienced because of man's sin. In his case the suffering came in the midst of people's rejection of truth, such as his crucifixion at the hands of the scribes and Pharisees of his day. They were wedded to their longstanding Jewish traditions rather than being genuinely interested in the OT and what it actually is expressing. But the suffering of a sinful Christian is that of his own sin and hating it (cf. 8:23), along with the negative effects of other people's sin in his life. If a person is truly desirous of being freed from his sin and the sins of others in the eternal Kingdom of God, then he will gain an existence there of moral perfection and life which will be more wonderful than he can ever imagine.

Nevertheless, it is also true that, if the sinful Christian is willing to be rejected by the world and the religious communities that include the institutions of Christianity that are characterized by their traditions and not by the biblical truth, then he will also find himself in the future in an unbelievably impressive situation of being morally perfect and inheriting the eternal Kingdom of God just as Jesus does.

²⁰⁶ Λογίζομαι γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ ἄξια τὰ παθήματα τοῦ νῦν καιροῦ πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσιν δόξαν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι εἰς ἡμᾶς – In order to bolster his argument that there is a bright future for the Gentile Roman Christians and himself, Paul comments that he has figured out that all the hardships of his own and other's sin that he has endured as a human being and a Christian in the present realm are nothing in comparison to the wonderful experience of moral perfection and eternal life that God will show and bring about in their lives at a future date, i.e., when Jesus returns.

In 2 Corinthians 4:17, Paul calls his earthly sufferings "momentary, insignificant trouble" [momentary, light affliction] that "is producing for us an eternal, weighty awesomeness [weight of glory far] beyond all measure and proportion." Thus, no amount of suffering or pain for a Christian as one who is still sinful and even rejected by the world and religious communities as Jesus was can hold a candle to the incomparable and enjoyable personal sense of well-being that he will experience in eternal life.

²⁰⁷ ἢ γὰρ ἀποκαταδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται – Now, Paul pulls into the conversation the actual creation that is its own entity separate from human beings, and he personifies it. He declares that the creation, like authentic human believers, is eagerly looking forward to the time when God will end the present realm and create the new one that will be characterized by life and not death, by moral perfection and not sin, and by the true and eternal "children of God," who will become obvious to everyone. Why does Paul do this? Probably to emphasize the fact that there is nothing in the present realm, including the Torah with its Mosaic Covenant, that is ultimately relevant to or is worth focusing on for the true believer. And there is nothing in the present realm that can fully satisfy a human being, because this creation is "subject to futility" and "decay" and "groaning" (8:20-22).

In other words, the next and future realm, which will contain the eternal Kingdom of God, is the only realm worth focusing on because everything will be perfect and permanent and will neither decay nor die. We human beings in the future realm will find ourselves completely fulfilled and satisfied with our existences at every moment. Indeed, it is as though the present creation longs to change completely and be different from the way it is, especially to be rid of human beings who are in rebellion against God and to be inhabited by only morally perfect human beings. Certainly, the animals who are sacrificed according to the instructions of the Mosaic Covenant would find it more to their liking if such a violent death was not a part of their experience. In addition, Jesus' death was only because the present realm includes death as part of its nature. Thus all the decay, deterioration, and death of the present realm will disappear and is leading the creation to be eager to rid itself of these things.

Thus, accepting the condition of the present realm and not trying to make heaven on earth is part of a mature and biblical outlook on life. Those who think the Bible is calling us (and not Jesus) to bring about the Kingdom of God are missing the point. And even the millennial kingdom of Jesus, who will rule over the entire earth, will still contain sin. But fortunately it will not contain Satan (cf. Revelation 20).

Romans 8:23 And not only this, but we also, because we have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, while we eagerly await (ἀπεκδεχόμενοι) our adoption, being released from our body.

Romans 8:25 However, if we hope for what we do not see, we are eagerly awaiting it (ἀπεκδεχόμεθα) with patient endurance.

Hebrews 9:27 Indeed, inasmuch as it is unavoidable for men to die once, and after this—judgment, **9:28** thus also, the Messiah, having been offered once (ἅπαξ) in order to bear the sins of many, will be seen a second time, apart from sins, by those who eagerly await (ἀπεκδεχόμενοις) him for salvation.

All the uses of ἀπεκδεχομαι – eagerly await

Rom. 8:19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

Rom. 8:23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Rom. 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

1Cor. 1:7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Gal. 5:5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

Phil. 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

Heb. 9:28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

1Pet. 3:20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

²⁰⁸ τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη. οὐχ ἐκούσα ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα, ἐφ' ἐλπίδι – God has caused the natural realm to share in the same death-like and deterioration-like characteristics of sinful human beings. The reason for this has been so that the natural realm can itself eagerly look forward with God and His adopted children to the new creation where these characteristics will no longer exist. In other words, the creation will go through the same kind of transformation as authentically believing human beings in that it will no longer contain the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics and accompanying issues of deterioration, decay, death, and even natural events that wreak death and havoc among human beings. Therefore, the creation experiences the same level of desire on the basis of God's guaranteed promise to rescue the sons of God from their slavery to death, so that it can be said to "hope" i.e., wait confidently, for eternal life and the eternal creation of the "new heaven and the new earth" (cf. Revelation 21) in the same way that people do.

²⁰⁹ ὅτι καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ θεοῦ – Just as human beings must of necessity obey their sinfulness and rebel against God even when He changes them inwardly, the creation has been enslaved to decay, deterioration, death and the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics. However, when God transforms the creation along with human beings as a result of the final judgment and Jesus' advocacy for them, it will experience the same kind of wonderful and marvelous characteristics of life, moral order, and natural order where there are no catastrophes and death causing events such as diseases, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, etc. The creation will be free from its forced slavery to decay and be allowed to exist in glorious perfection that matches that of the moral perfection of God's saved sinners.

Cf. **Revelation 21:1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

²¹⁰ οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν – Paul says that it is a logical conclusion of looking at the creation in the light of the biblical message that every tornado, every hurricane, every earthquake, every disease, etc. points to the fact that the creation looks at these events and simply groans, longing to be free from them. These groans of the creation Paul likens to a woman in childbirth who is anticipating the pain's going away once the baby is born, i.e., once God transforms the creation and makes it "perfect" like the moral perfection of the human beings who will inhabit it with Jesus as their king in the eternal Kingdom of God. And the creation groans in this way with the adopted children of God who long to be free of their decay and impending death in order to experience immortality and moral perfection. Thus, even the creation looks beyond the relevant realm of the Torah and Mosaic Covenant, i.e., the present realm, to the relevant realm of the Messiah, ultimately the eternal Kingdom of God after the temporary Kingdom of Israel (cf. Revelation 20,21).

²¹¹ οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἔχοντες, ἡμεῖς καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν νοσήσαντες ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν – A key and necessary characteristic of an inwardly changed human being is continued sadness and disappointment because of his sin, which, on an emotional level, results in persistent, gut-level groaning. Indeed, this groaning may even cause him on occasion to doubt the authenticity of his belief. But the encouraging fact

that Paul is pointing out is that this degree of groaning is a sign of authentic faith, as much as we sometimes think otherwise. Paul calls the groaning of a sinful human whose inwardness has been changed “the first fruits of the Spirit.” Thus, this groaning, is the evidence of a person’s desire to rid himself of the pain that comes from the psychological and emotional effects of moral guilt. This pain also comes from a person’s observing and feeling the effects internally and externally of his immoral condition in the midst of his actions before God and his interactions with other human beings, where these effects can come from his own sinfulness, other’s sinfulness, or the natural effects of this creation through disease, decay, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. Nevertheless, in the midst of the groaning and on the basis of God’s promises to Abraham, the authentic believer is confident that one day God will transform him into a morally perfect person and thereby release him from his inherent sinfulness, from “this deadly body” as Paul calls it in Romans 7:24. This transformation will constitute the full harvesting of the crop of change that God miraculously brings about for human beings in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Paul indicates that the Christian waits confidently for this future transformation to take place—because he has all along been assuming God’s faithfulness to His promises to Abraham to rescue a group of Jews and Gentiles from His eternal condemnation. In addition, Paul calls this future transformation an “adoption.” In Romans 8:15, Paul has already stated that Christians have been adopted by God as a result of the Holy Spirit’s causing an inward change within them in the present realm. Therefore, here Paul must be referring to the completion of this process of God’s adopting human beings as His children, when He transforms them into morally perfect beings and they acquire the fullness of their inheritance by occupying the eternal Kingdom of God. This will mean also the release for human beings from their earthly bodies that are characterized by decay and death, so that God replaces these bodies with eternal, perfect, and indestructible ones.

Paul has already referred to this kind of experience for the true believer in Romans 5:3ff., whereby a Christian who grasps these concepts actually boasts in his difficult circumstances, including his own inherent immorality as even it tests and authenticates his belief.

Cf. [Philippians 3:20](#) For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; [21](#) who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Cf. [1 Thessalonians 1:9](#) For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, [10](#) and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

²¹² τῇ γὰρ ἐλπίδι ἐσώθημεν ἐλπίς δὲ βλεπομένη οὐκ ἔστιν ἐλπίς· ὁ γὰρ βλέπει τίς ἐλπίζει – Here Paul explicitly states that an authentic Christian does not set his heart on what Christianity can do for him in the present realm, but what it can do for him in the future realm. There is and should always be “hope” as that which characterizes the Christian’s psychological outlook at human existence. The Christian looks to the future only, not the present, for that which will ultimately satisfy him, so that he can accept whatever occurs in his life in the present realm. Thus, “salvation” is always future for an authentically changed person, and he can see that any present circumstances that are not entirely painful are merely a bonus gift from God, while He still wants the person to focus his desires and hope on the future salvation at the judgment from His condemnation and on his eventual transformation into a morally perfect person.

²¹³ εἰ δὲ ὁ οὐ βλέπομεν ἐλπίζομεν· δι’ ὑπομονῆς ἀπεκδεχόμεθα – Thus, Paul and his fellow Gentile Christians in Rome are intended to wait patiently for God’s timing of fully rescuing them from His justice and transferring them to the eternal Kingdom of God. They can look at this present realm and never think that they need to “hope” for something in it in order to be satisfied and fulfilled in their lives. Indeed, they will never be completely satisfied and fulfilled in the present realm. Everything in this life is meaningful. But nothing is completely fulfilling and satisfying. Thus, Christians keep longing for the “invisible” eternal Kingdom of God that will become theirs only at some point in the future, i.e., when they die and are raised at Jesus’ return or when they are lifted up from the earth to join Jesus when he returns (cf. [1 Thessalonians 4:13ff.](#)). This longing occurs in the midst of a supernatural patience and enduring of all hardships of the present existence, especially those of a person’s own sinfulness, while also having authentic belief.

²¹⁴ Ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα συναντιλαμβάνεται τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ ἡμῶν· τὸ γὰρ τί προσευξόμεθα καθὼς οὐκ οἶδαμεν, ἀλλὰ αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα ὑπερεντυγχάνει στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις – Paul refers here to the radical psychology of human pain and suffering, especially that of moral guilt and despair in the face of God’s justice. This state of being for a human being can be so overwhelming as to make him completely incapable of expressing himself in a manner that he thinks is helpful in his relationship with God. Indeed, as far as he is concerned, all that he can do is groan in the midst of his guilt, pain, and suffering that is ultimately caused by his sinfulness and the problematic situation of the whole creation that surrounds him. The good thing, though, is that his groans are not for nothing. In fact, they are themselves an effect of the work of God’s Spirit within him. Thus, Paul can say that God is communicating to God through a human being’s groaning over his sinfulness and living in this present realm that itself brings a lot of suffering into his life. This is to say that there is a divine element to our groaning over our evil condition and that of the creation, in that this is the Spirit’s doing and manner of communication to God of our desire for not only His mercy but also His future gift of moral perfection and eternal life, for one groans also for that which he does not have—perfect goodness within an eternal existence.

This is the only use of the word ὑπερεντυγχάνει, which clearly means the same thing as ὑπερ and εντυγχάνει, i.e., to intercede or plead before someone on behalf of someone else—either to appeal for mercy or to appeal for justice, as in [Acts 25:24](#), [Romans 8:27, 34](#); [11:22](#), and [Hebrews 7:25](#).

²¹⁵ ὁ δὲ ἐραυνῶν τὰς καρδίας οἶδεν τί τὸ φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος, ὅτι κατὰ θεὸν ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἀγίων – In this process of the Spirit’s leading us authentic believers to groan over our immoral condition, God is the best interpreter of what is transpiring

within us by reading our groanings as those that come from people who are truly different from the rest of the rebellious world and who are pleading for mercy and morality as their future experience. This whole process also contributes to the eventual outcome of human existence—eternal life.

Therefore, again, eternal life should not be described as simply God's doing through His grace and mercy. It is also man's "doing" in conjunction with what God is accomplishing internally for a person. The Spirit of God causes sinners to participate in the process of salvation by moving them inwardly to lament their sin and any other pain this world causes. And God hears their cries of suffering and faithfully keeps their faith and longing for salvation intact to the end of their lives.

The word ἐντυγχάνει literally means to turn towards, to meet, to approach, to intercede or to plead before someone on behalf of someone else.

[Acts 25:24](#) Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me (ἐνέτυχόν μοι), both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer.

[Romans 8:27](#) and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints (ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἁγίων) according to the will of God.

[Romans 8:34](#) who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us (ὁς καὶ ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν).

[Romans 11:2](#) God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel (ὡς ἐντυγχάνει τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ)?

[Hebrews 7:25](#) Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (πάντοτε ζῶν εἰς τὸ ἐντυγχάνειν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν).

²¹⁶ Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν τὸν θεὸν πάντα συνεργεῖ εἰς ἀγαθόν, τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν – In the midst of ongoing and painful sinfulness within them and living in this imperfect world that itself causes problems and suffering in everyone's lives, and because God is doing so much to aid Christians in their persevering in their belief, they are said by Paul to know that the outcome of their existences as human beings will be a good one, i.e., their "glorification" by being granted mercy at the final judgment and moral perfection in eternity (cf. Romans 5:3ff.).

Paul also says that this will happen for the people who are caused to respond positively to the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah that is also all according to God's sovereign and eternal plan that He formulated even before He brought the creation into existence.

²¹⁷ ὅτι οὗς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνος τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς – The basis for Paul's confident assertion that Christians know that the outcome of their lives is a "good" one, i.e., mercy and eternal life, is the theological process that he has come to realize that God goes through to make this happen. First, God "foreknew" or chose those whom He would create to become eventually authentic believers in the midst of their sinfulness. Then, God predestined them to become like His Son, the Messiah, i.e., morally perfect and immortal in the eternal Kingdom of God. This is to say that He established their eternal destiny to being just like Jesus in this manner, so that nothing would prevent their destiny from changing. Included in this process was God's purpose of providing Jesus with companions in the Kingdom of God. And, by being the "firstborn" among his "brethren," Jesus is the most important "Son of God," the one who inherits the "largest share of his Father's property," which is to say the greatest responsibility among all the human beings who inherit the "land" of the eternal Kingdom of God. Jesus as the very icon of God is the king of this property, who also rules over all his companions and "brethren." And God will transform authentic believers into the very icons of Jesus in that they will be as morally perfect and glorified as he is.

²¹⁸ οὗς δὲ προώρισεν, τούτους καὶ ἐκάλεσεν· καὶ οὗς ἐκάλεσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδικαίωσεν· οὗς δὲ ἐδικαίωσεν, τούτους καὶ ἐδόξασεν – Then, when the time came for those whom God had chosen to become actual authentic believers, God changed their inwardness in the midst of their "hearing" the truth of the biblical message, thus "calling" them to proceed toward their determined, eternal destiny. Thus, as a result of their genuine, biblical belief, similar to what God did toward Abraham in Genesis 15:6, He considered these chosen human beings to be in such a good standing before Him that they would receive His mercy and forgiveness at the judgment. Finally, because they were guaranteed to receive eternal mercy, Paul can say that their transformation into morally perfect people was as good as done. In other words, no step in the process from God's choosing and planning which sinful human beings would be rescued to their actually being rescued and transformed is any less certain than God's existence itself. If God has determined to do something, He will do it.

All the English translations I looked at translate the aorist tenses of the verbs "called," "justified," and "glorified" with the past tense. I have translated them with the present tense to indicate that Paul means simply that these things happen necessarily according to God's eternal plans and purposes.

²¹⁹ Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν πρὸς ταῦτα; εἰ ὁ θεὸς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν, τίς καθ' ἡμῶν – Paul has emphatically stated that God has His plans to save from His wrath those whom He has chosen and predestined to live in the eternal Kingdom of God. Now, coming to the end of his presentation on God's faithfulness to people through His Spirit, grace, mercy, and the Messiah Jesus, in contrast to the long term and inferior effects of just the Torah with its Mosaic Covenant, Paul asks a rhetorical question as to what an appropriate response should be to all these things that God has done, is doing, and will do. He states the situation as God's being *for* those whom He has predestined to be rescued from His condemnation, and he compares God's being *for* us with others who might be *against* us. The implied question is, is there someone out there who is *against* us such that this person can completely thwart God's plans and purposes to rescue those whom He has chosen? Indeed, would even God turn against us and disrupt His own plans, or would even the Messiah turn against us and disrupt God's plans?

God from following being faithful to His promises on behalf of believers. And finally, nothing that has been created by God (and everything that exists other than God has been created by Him), is more powerful than the Creator and can oppose Him and cause Him to change His plans for those whom He has chosen to save.

²²⁸ Ἀληθεῖαν λέγω ἐν Χριστῷ, οὐ ψεύδομαι, συμμαρτυροῦσιν μοι τῆς συνειδήσεώς μου ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ – Having stated categorically in chapters 1-8 that Jesus as the Messiah is the basis of obtaining both the Abrahamic promises of a great nation for Israel and eternal life for authentic believers in chapters 1-8, Paul's objective now in chapters 9-11 is to show that even though both Jews and Gentiles obtain God's blessing of eternal life through only the Messiah and not the Mosaic Covenant, God is still being faithful to His promise to the Jews to bless them in history as a special people group. Nevertheless, not all Jews will enjoy the fulfillment of this promise, and this comes as a surprise to the Jews of Jesus' and Paul's day. And Paul implies that this would also be a major objection on the Jews' part to the gospel of Jesus the Messiah which Paul is preaching. Therefore, in this section Paul defends his perspective on the gospel which does not need the Mosaic Covenant in order for a person to have an acceptable standing before God, i.e., to be *dikaïos* = qualified to receive eternal mercy and life. A person needs only belief in and obedience to the Messiah. Even so, God has not forgotten the very people to whom He gave the Mosaic Covenant, the Jews, and the promises which He made specifically to them—that on the land of Israel He would shape them into the greatest nation in all human history (cf. Genesis 12:1-3).

In 9:1-5, Paul defends himself against the accusation that he is anti-Jewish and has invented a false religion. He is convinced that, by means of the Spirit of God, who has opened his eyes to the truth of the gospel and who has been his persuader the entire time that he has restudied and taught the gospel, his understanding of the Bible testifies and bears witness with his emotions that he is correctly teaching the truth. In other words, he not only knows the truth, but he feels it besides. And in this case, the feelings are not great but painful (similar to what Paul felt in Romans 7 regarding his continued sin even as a genuine believer in God and Jesus). He will go on to say that he would rather be eternally condemned if all his fellow Jews would be saved. But he also knows that God's plan has always been to create two different kinds of Jews—one group, the larger group, who will be eternally condemned, and a smaller group, the "remnant," who will receive God's mercy in the Kingdom of God.

²²⁹ ὅτι λύπη μοί ἐστιν μεγάλη καὶ ἀδιάλειπτος ὁδὸν τῇ καρδίᾳ μου – Paul's heart breaks for his fellow Jews, which is probably the majority of them in his day, who have refused to embrace their own Messiah, because he knows that they currently stand to incur God's wrath and destruction.

²³⁰ ἡχώμην γὰρ ἀνάθεμα εἶναι αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν συγγενῶν μου κατὰ σάρκα – If it were actually possible, Paul would be willing to swap places with his fellow unbelieving Jews, who are his "brothers" in the nation of Israel, i.e., of the same ethnic and cultural group, who are committed to obeying both the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. He is willing to be damned by God if they will all believe in Jesus as the Messiah and obtain God's salvation from eternal destruction.

²³¹ οἵτινές εἰσιν Ἰσραηλῖται, ὧν ἡ υἰοθεσία καὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ αἱ διαθήκαι καὶ ἡ νομοθεσία καὶ ἡ λατρεία καὶ αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι – Paul now lists the various benefits from God that the Jews have received. These are the ethnic, theological, and cultural qualifications which make them the chosen people of God within the history of the present realm.

1) They are physical descendants of Israel, i.e., Jacob, to whom God promised to fulfill the same promises which He made to Abraham.

2) They have acquired the status of children of God within the present realm, meaning that God has a special purpose for them in human history—to demonstrate His characteristics directly through them (e.g., He has clearly and explicitly exercised both His judgment and His grace on them at various points in their history as His people). Indeed, God says in Exodus 4:22, "Israel is My son, My firstborn."

3) The best option for interpreting the glory that belongs to the Jews is that God will eventually grant them the most honored position of all people groups when He shapes them into the "great nation" of the millennial kingdom upon Jesus' return. Another, but less likely, option is that God has manifested just how awesome and to be admired He is at various times in the Jews' history, e.g., miraculously rescuing them from the Egyptians under the leadership of Moses. I think that the first option, referring to the Jews' destiny, is better and more profound.

4) He has given the several covenants by which they both maintain their relationship with one another as it pertains to the present realm, and eventually the future eternal realm, starting with the millennial kingdom. These covenants are the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and New.

5) God has instructed the Jews with the written Torah, the OT scriptures, which are inerrant and infallible (cf. Romans 3:1 What then is the advantage of being a Jew, or what is the benefit of circumcision? 2 Great in every respect! Primarily, because they were entrusted with the messages of God).

6) God has specifically and uniquely designed the manner of their worshipping Him through the Mosaic Covenant with its Levitical priesthood and required offerings and sacrifices.

7) God has communicated His promises for them and for all mankind through them as a people group, starting with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. These promises include transforming them into "a great nation" of people who are all circumcised of heart, living on the land of Israel, ruled by their Messiah and king, Jesus, properly obeying the Mosaic Covenant, and ruling over the rest of the world (cf. Genesis 12:1,2; Deuteronomy 28,30; Jeremiah 33; Zechariah 6). The also include eternal life for those Jews who imitate Abraham's belief.

²³² ὧν οἱ πατέρες καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν – Continuing the list of ethnic, theological, and cultural qualifications of the Jews and their being God's chosen people, Paul says,

8) that the great men and women of the faith in the Old Testament, starting with Abraham, are Jews, e.g., Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah,

Jacob, Rachel, et al., who are not only the greatest people in human history, but also the ancestors of the current Jews, to whom they look for instruction about God.

9) God has also brought into existence the Messiah through the Jews, and he rules and rescues people from every ethnic group. He is first and foremost the Jews' Messiah, but certainly, as Paul has argued, he is also the Messiah of any genuine believer in human history. And the Messiah technically rules over all things that God has made, because this is the role that God grants to the Son of God by virtue of the Davidic Covenant (cf. Psalm 8). He is "over all things"—except God.

Paul also uses what I think is a parenthetical phrase, because it begins with the neuter, and not the masculine, definite article τὸ. After commenting that the Messiah is from the Israelites, the Jews, Paul parenthetically indicates that he is such "according to the flesh," which is to say that Jesus as the Messiah is no different physically speaking from his fellow Jews. It is after this parenthetical statement that Paul says also that the Messiah is "above all things." Again, this is in line with the whole concept of the Son of God of the Davidic Covenant. The king of Israel was always God's proxy and human representative on the earth with the authority to rule over the entirety of God's creation.

Paul follows the above list of the important characteristics of the Jews as God's earthly chosen people with a doxology, praising God into eternity for His plans and purposes for the Jews. He has made them the most theologically privileged people in the world. There is no other people group that have the continued and persistent attention of God, who have received God's covenants and His promises to remain faithful to them in spite of their unfaithfulness to Him, who can turn to their sacred literature, the Old Testament, and learn how to live life well, and who can point to one of their own and say, "Here is the most important being in all of cosmic history—OUR Messiah!" And yet, as Paul said back at the beginning of chapter 3, they have not lived up to their calling—at least not yet. They will do so eventually, and the whole creation expectantly waits for this moment, when Jesus returns and all the Jews worship and obey God as He has longed for them to do since He rescued them from slavery in Egypt and gave them the Mosaic Covenant.

Thus, how could Paul not ache for his fellow Jews who are for the most part rejecting their role as God's earthly chosen people by rejecting all that God has been and will be doing with them and through them.

Another verse in the NT that has a similar word structure to the very end of this verse is [2 Corinthians 11:31](#) The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever (ὁ ὢν εὐλογητός εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας), knows that I am not lying.

There is also [Ephesians 1:3](#) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Εὐλογητός ὁ θεός καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

²³³ Οὐχ οἶον δὲ ὅτι ἐκπέπτωκεν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ. οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ οὗτοι Ἰσραὴλ – In 9:6-13 Paul argues that God never promised each and every individual Jew to receive His blessings, but only the people group and nation as a whole that contains certain individuals who acquire genuine belief. In other words, God always intended that there be two different kinds of Jews. There are those who are simply physical descendants of Jacob, i.e., "from Israel." And there are those who not only are physical descendants of Jacob, but they also are of the "Israel" who will actually experience God's promises because of their changed hearts and authentic belief that is like Abraham's, Isaac's, and Jacob's.

Here, Paul says that "all those who are from Israel," the Jews who descend from Jacob, are "not Israel," the descendants of Jacob who will enjoy God's fulfilling His promises to them. In other words, a sub-group of Jews will receive the promises of God while the other sub-group of Jews will not. This is "the message of God" that has not "failed," that God intended to call the nation of Israel as His chosen people while only some of them would eventually acquire the fulfillment of His promises.

Thus, Paul anticipates a criticism of his gospel, that in spite of all the things that make the Jewish people God's chosen ones in the present realm, including the promise to bless any of them who have the same belief as Abraham and to make of them a great nation, it sure appears as though God is failing to follow through on His promises to them. And the main piece of evidence regarding God's failure is the lack of belief in the Messiah among the Jews. These are the Messiah's own people group in that he descends from Jacob and therefore from Isaac and Abraham too. However, Paul makes the remarkable statement that simply being a physical descendant of Israel/Jacob does not qualify a person for inclusion in receiving God's promises and blessings—when this must have been the mentality of the Jews of Jesus' and Paul's day who were guarding in their minds and actions with every fiber of their being the Mosaic Covenant. But Paul is saying that God has chosen only certain individual descendants of Jacob to whom He will fulfill His promises to the nation of Israel. It is a chosen few who will fill out all the qualifications of being Paul's "fellow-countrymen" (cf. 9:3) with their belief. Therefore, not all Jews will be included in the "great nation" of the Abrahamic promise.

Another option for interpreting who is the "Israel" of God is to go in the direction of Covenant Theology where, since the first appearance of Jesus, the Church of mainly Gentiles and some Jews is the new Israel. This is because the Jews consistently disobeyed God, especially by rejecting their Messiah, Jesus, and as a result God has rejected them. Thus, Paul is saying that "all those who are from Israel," i.e., the Jews, are not "Israel," because it is comprised of a mass of believing Gentile Christians and some believing Jewish Christians. This means too that all the promises that God made to the Jews in the Old Testament transfer to the Church so that, for example, the promised land of Canaan/Israel is now heaven where Christians spend eternity. But I think that the evidence in both the Old Testament and the New Testament demonstrates that God will still fulfill His earthly promises to the Jews and that believing Gentiles will join the Jews in enjoying these promises even during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 when Jesus will rule over the Jews on the land of Israel and over the Gentile world of the rest of the earth. Romans 11 will reveal this to us.

²³⁴ οὐδ' ὅτι εἰσιν σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ πάντες τέκνα, ἀλλ' ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα – In Genesis 21, a controversy arises in Sarah's mind regarding Abraham's two children, Ishmael and Isaac. The former, who is Abraham's son by Sarah's Egyptian handmaid Hagar, mocks the latter, who is Abraham's son by Sarah, and it upsets her so much that she wants Abraham to expel

Ishmael from their house. But this upsets Abraham, because he apparently loves Ishmael. After all, he is his son. But God tells him not to worry and to do what Sarah wants, because He will make Ishmael's descendants a great nation, and "in Isaac will your seed be named" (cf. Genesis 21:12).

There are two options for what God means. 1) Like the statement God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed," God is saying that all individuals from the various ethnic groups in the world who imitate Isaac's faith will obtain the same blessing as he, eternal life. In this case, "the seed [who are] named" are the future individuals who have genuine belief, whether Jews or Gentiles. 2) It is through Isaac as the *promised* son that God will continue to deal with Abraham's physical descendants. This means, for example, that it will be Isaac's descendants with whom God makes the Mosaic Covenant, not Ishmael's descendants, and it will be Isaac's descendants, not Ishmael's descendants, who eventually become the "great nation" with the Messiah ruling over them and their acquiring genuine belief.

I think that option #2 makes more sense, that God is assuring Abraham that He will grace Isaac's descendants with the function and role ("name") of being the chosen people of God right on up to their becoming the "great nation" of the millennial kingdom. Thus, God declares that Isaac is the son and heir of the promises He made to Abraham in Genesis 12. Ishmael is not. Thus, the "children of the flesh" of the next verse are those who came through Abraham's manipulating the situation by having children through Hagar, Sarah's servant, while the "children of the promise" are those who came through Sarah. The latter are the "seed" of Abraham which is the same as saying that they are "children of God." To them belong the "adoption as sons" of Romans 9:4. Consequently, by drawing an analogy between those who are "Israel" and God's promised son to Abraham, Paul is saying that not all children (whether Abraham's, Isaac's, or Jacob's) are going to be descendants of Abraham in the sense that they will participate in the greatness of his nation or that they will acquire eternal life (because to do one is to do the other).

In this way, Paul is establishing that God's promise is what is important for any human being's receiving God's blessing, not the person's direct ethnic link with Abraham and the patriarchs. By implication, he is also establishing that it will be Jews of authentic belief who will be the true "seed" of Abraham. As a result, there are always two things going on with respect to the Jews as descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. One is that they play a special role in human history as a specific ethnic and cultural group—the earthly chosen people of God of both belief and unbelief. The other is that their role ultimately requires that they be people of authentic belief, which will be the case only when Jesus returns and God changes the heart of every Jew still living—the millennial kingdom earthly chosen people of God who will all have genuine belief.

Cf. [Genesis 21:12](#) But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through [in, by means of] Isaac your descendants will be named (עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל יִהְיֶה שֵׁם בְּנֵי־יִצְחָק) (ὅτι ἐν Ἰσαακ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα).

²³⁵ τοῦτ' ἔστιν, οὐ τὰ τέκνα τῆς σαρκὸς ταῦτα τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας λογίζεται εἰς σπέρμα – Paul continues with this line of reasoning and says again that those who can truly call themselves "children of God" physically speaking and, therefore, the "seed" of Abraham physically speaking to whom God made His promises in Genesis 12 are those whom God promises to Abraham through Sarah, meaning Isaac and his physical descendants. This is instead of Ishmael's being able to claim any of these labels.

Also, Paul's greater point is that just as Ishmael was not the son whom God promised, so also there will be physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who on the one hand are "promised" from God, but on the other hand will not inherit the fulfillment of both promises of God of being a "great nation" and acquiring eternal life. They may be members of the people group who are "chosen" by God, i.e., physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but they are not eternally Abraham's "seed," because they do not have authentic belief.

Of course, this would be a radical and even offensive perspective to the Jews of Jesus' and Paul's day who wholeheartedly believed that simply because they were Jews and were religiously following the Mosaic Covenant, they would receive all God's blessings and the fulfillment of His promises.

²³⁶ ἐπαγγελίας γὰρ ὁ λόγος οὗτος κατὰ τὸν καιρὸν τοῦτον ἐλεύσομαι καὶ ἔσται τῇ Σάρρα υἱός – Paul quotes from Genesis 18:10 & 14 when God appears to Abraham and declares that He will return the following year which will result in Sarah's bearing him a son. The next statement in Genesis is that Sarah was past the age of childbearing, meaning that God would make the impossible happen. But Paul's point is that God basically promised Abraham that he would have a child—through Sarah and not through Hagar. Thus, God's making a statement to the effect that something was going to happen is the same as His promising it. Therefore, Isaac, who was born a year later, can legitimately be labelled a "child of God," because he did not come into existence merely as a physical descendant of Abraham like Ishmael, but also as someone whom God promised.

And this point is true whether or not Isaac ends up being a person of genuine belief like his father Abraham. Even if he was not, he was still son who was promised by God. Nevertheless, it does seem from the rest of Isaac's story that he was a man of authentic belief.

What about Ishmael? He theoretically could have had genuine belief, but he was not the promised son as Isaac. Thus, Paul is using God's speaking of Isaac's being promised as Abraham's physical descendant to emphasize the necessity of promise that results in any one of the Jews' also being a spiritual descendant of Abraham.

²³⁷ Οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ Ῥεβέκκα ἐξ ἐνὸς κοίτην ἔχουσα, Ἰσαὰκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν – Paul now uses another physical situation to make his point about God's promises and intention in regard to individual Jews. The circumstances of Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob say the same thing, that when God says that something is going to happen, it is the same as His promising it. And it just so happens that the circumstances involve the "promised" son of Abraham, Isaac. After he was born, grew up, and was married to Rebekah, she became pregnant by this famous patriarch to whom all Jews claim a physical connection that they think means that God will bless them.

²³⁸ μήπω γὰρ γεννηθέντων μηδὲ πραξάντων τι ἀγαθὸν ἢ φαῦλον, ἵνα ἡ κατ' ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις τοῦ θεοῦ μένη – Paul is saying that God made a purposeful choice about the twin boys, Esau and Jacob, that had no basis in their moral behavior and obedience to Him. This would be radically different from the perspective of the Jews of Jesus' and Paul's day. They believed that in addition to their being the chosen people of God as physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant they would gain God's blessings in the fulfillment of His promises.

But Paul is saying that God makes sovereign choices in regard to people regardless of their moral choices. In other words, He determines their destinies and even their existential choices before they are even born, and by extrapolation, before their mothers become pregnant with them.

Therefore, the fulfillment of God's promises are not ultimately dependent on human beings' choices and their response to Him as their God. Instead, God chooses beforehand according to His divine and sovereign purposes how human beings will choose to respond to Him and what role they will play in human history, including whether or not one of a Abraham's, Isaac's, and Jacob's physical descendants will be someone who will eventually become his spiritual descendant and a member of the "great nation."

²³⁹ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος, ἐρρέθη αὐτῇ ὅτι ὁ μείζων δουλεύσει τῷ ἐλάσσονι – Genesis 25:23d, רַב־יָעֲבֹד יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׁעָבֹד אֶת-עֵשָׂא (καὶ ὁ μείζων δουλεύσει τῷ ἐλάσσονι). Paul indicates that God declared to Rebekah that the older son of the two in her womb would not acquire the blessing of his father and therefore of Abraham, even though it would be expected that he would in that culture. Instead, Jacob, the younger son, would receive this blessing, even though we now know that he did so through deceitful means. Therefore, it is Jacob who becomes "Israel" when God changes his name. In other words, just as God's promise produces "children of God" and "seed" of Abraham like Isaac, so also God's sovereign purposeful choice produces them. His plans, purposes, and promises are all working in conjunction with one another. On the one hand, God produces physical descendants through them, and, on the other hand, He produces spiritual descendants among the Jews through them.

²⁴⁰ καθὼς γέγραπται· τὸν Ἰακώβ ἠγάπησα, τὸν δὲ Ἡσαὺ ἐμίσησα – Malachi 1:2d,3a, בָּרַךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ (καὶ ἠγάπησα τὸν Ἰακώβ), וְהָאֵשׁ שָׂנֵא (τὸν δὲ Ἡσαὺ ἐμίσησα). The basic meaning of שָׂנֵא seems to be hate. But in this context, as well as others, to hate someone is also to reject him. Theologically, as demonstrated by various statements about different people in OT history, we can picture that God has chosen to open His arms and draw Jacob (and his physical descendants) close to Him by granting some of them authentic belief in order to fulfill all the Abrahamic promises within their people group. It will be Jacob's descendants, and not Esau's, who will become the "great nation" of Israel and who will also acquire eternal life—both through their genuine belief.

In other words, God is saying with בָּרַךְ that He reached out and embraced Jacob, thus positioning him within the Abrahamic promises of being a "great nation" on the land of Israel and acquiring eternal life. In contrast, God is saying with שָׂנֵא that He pushed Esau away and rejected him, thus positioning him outside the promises of Abraham *in their fullness*, i.e., that involve all the promises. Esau's descendants will not be the "great nation" per se, even if some of them become authentic believers. It will be some of Jacob's descendants who do. And these actions by God were on the basis of His own independent, sovereign, purposeful choice apart from anything that either Jacob or Esau had done, because God made the choice before they were even born (v. 11). Therefore, neither mere physical descendency (cf. vs. 8,9) nor human actions (vs. 10-13) are the *ultimate* basis for a person's relationship with God and participating in the fulfillment of His promises that involve the greatness of the Jews and eternal life. It is God's plans, purposes, promises, and choices (through the Messiah!) that are the basis.

²⁴¹ Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; μὴ ἀδικία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ; μὴ γένοιτο – In 9:14-29, Paul admits that it seems unfair that God discriminates between individuals, that He chooses some to receive His eternal mercy, i.e., "Israel" comprised of some of the physical descendants of Jacob/Israel, and He chooses others not to receive His mercy. However, God is like a potter and the Jews (and all human beings) are clay pots whom He is sovereignly and independently shaping on His wheel. God is the one who makes us all blameworthy and then condemns some while also having mercy on others.

As a result, Paul now asks if there is "injustice with God," that it is unfair of God to be orchestrating history with some people, the Jews, being given His promises and with some of them receiving the fulfillment of His promises and His blessings without checking in with all people and taking into account their choices—so that He would then reward them commensurately, with eternal life if they demonstrate appropriate belief and obedience and with eternal condemnation if they demonstrate appropriate unbelief and disobedience.

Paul's answer to his own question is, "Absolutely not!" The plain fact is that it is neither unjust nor unfair for God to deal with people as He does and as he will go on to argue—by the very nature of the dynamic which exists between God as the transcendent Creator and human beings as His creatures. This dynamic is one of the most difficult concepts for us human beings to grasp and to accept, but Paul states categorically that it is true.

²⁴² τῷ Μωϋσεῖ γὰρ λέγει· ἐλεήσω ὃν ἂν ἐλεῶ καὶ οἰκτιρήσω ὃν ἂν οἰκτίρω – Paul quotes exactly the Septuagint of Exodus 33:19 to the effect that God chooses to whom He will exercise mercy. This was during the process of demonstrating His magnificence personally to Moses when He hid him in the cleft of the rock. It is as if God was saying, "Yes, I am glorious and magnificent, and you need to understand that My sovereignty over human history, including who receives My forgiveness and who does not, is at the very height of what it means for Me to glorious—because I am the transcendent Author of this story in which you are existing."

[Exodus 33:19](#) And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion (וְרַחֵם אֲנִי אֲחַיֵּם וְלֹא יִשְׁפָּט אִישׁ אֶת-אֶחָיו) (καὶ ἐλεήσω ὃν ἂν ἐλεῶ, καὶ οἰκτιρήσω ὃν ἂν οἰκτίρω)."

It is important to remember the context, that Paul's concern for his fellow Jews is that they are not demonstrating authentic faith and having received God's mercy/grace and compassion by believing in Jesus as the Messiah. And Paul has argued that only some Jews will receive such from God on the basis of His purposeful choice. Is this unjust of God. No, Paul says, because God has mercy/grace on whom He chooses—even according to the Old Testament, which is to say that the Old Testament assumes the exact same dynamic between God and human beings as the New Testament and Paul, who now goes on to explain more explicitly this dynamic.

²⁴³ ἄρα οὐκ οὐ τοῦ θέλοντος οὐδὲ τοῦ τρέχοντος ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἐλεῶντος θεοῦ – Indeed, it does not seem fair as to who receives mercy and who does not—if God chooses independently of people's willful actions. Our natural inclination is to think that everyone should receive what they deserve according to what they do. Instead, Paul is saying, in the situation of Moses, who might have wanted God to be merciful to all Jews who had rebelled at that time against Him and worshiped the golden calf, it would be only God who determined to whom He granted mercy.

Paul says, “it [God's granting someone mercy] does not belong to the one who wills, but it belongs to God who is merciful.” The final say as to who receives God's mercy is God, not man. No human being controls history in any sort of *ultimate* sense, even and most especially with respect to God's dispensing His forgiveness and compassion towards abject rebels (which of course includes all human beings created or born with sinfulness as their innate moral condition, i.e., all human beings, including Adam and Eve, except Jesus).

This is not to say that sinful human beings have the innate ability to “will/desire” genuinely God's mercy and to “run” their lives in such a way that they correctly satisfy the condition which God has placed on us in order to obtain His mercy and eternal life, but then God refuses to give them what they genuinely want! Paul is saying that both God's choice to give sinners His mercy and His choice to cause them to satisfy the necessary condition in order for Him to do so originate with God who “performs mercy,” and not with man—as Paul goes on to explain even more explicitly.

²⁴⁴ λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή τῷ Φαραὼ ὅτι εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἐξήγειρά σε ὅπως ἐνδείξωμαι ἐν σοὶ τὴν δύναμίν μου καὶ ὅπως διαγγεῖν τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ – Paul then confirms his previous statement with a biblical example of God's sovereign rule and control of one individual in particular. God used Pharaoh, an abject unbeliever and a man who was in complete rebellion against Him, not to save Pharaoh and the Egyptian people, but to save the Israelites. While He displayed His harsh justice towards the Egyptians, God also displayed His strong mercy and compassion towards the Jews. And both elements of His character in this specific human moment of history were in existence so that people would have something with which to refer to remind them of just how great God is—even if it involved the suffering and death of many Egyptians who certainly never asked for God's judgment and justice on them. Nor did they ask for His mercy. The Pharaoh and his people were born in rebellion against God, and they remained such up through the tenth plague when God killed the firstborn of human beings and animals in every Egyptian household. The passage which Paul quotes is,

Exodus 9:16 “But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth (וְלִמְנוּן אֶת־כְּבוֹדִי הָאֶרֶץ בְּעֵינֵי הָעַמִּים וְזֵאת הַמְּגִדָּה אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְפָרֹחַ וְלָאֲרָץ מִצְרָיִם) (καὶ ἕνεκεν τούτου διετηρήθης, ἵνα ἐνδείξωμαι ἐν σοὶ τὴν ἰσχύϊν μου, καὶ ὅπως διαγγεῖν τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ).”

God is explicitly saying to Pharaoh that He has directed his life as an Egyptian in order to make him king of the Egyptians and cause him to make the choices that he is making so that God can demonstrate His transcendent power and sovereign power over the creation and so that who He is and what He is all about can be proclaimed throughout the Ancient Near East, i.e., the “earth” and world of the Egyptians and Israelites. In other words, the Pharaoh's choices originated ultimately with God and not with Pharaoh—the same way that the Jews' (those “from Israel” and those who end up actually being “Israel”) choices either to believe God or to rebel against God always originate with God and not with them.

²⁴⁵ ἄρα οὐκ ὃν θέλει ἐλεεῖ, ὃν δὲ θέλει σκληρύνει – Here is Paul's bottom line. His conclusion from these statements is that God is the sovereign determiner of people's roles on earth with respect to His mercy and judgment. If God chooses to have mercy on a person, then He does so by softening their inwardness and making them committed to Him at the level of their heart. If God chooses to exercise His judgment towards a person, then He further hardens their already present rebellious inwardness so that He is justified in passing judgment on them.

As I said, this is not easy either to understand or to accept as Paul will go on to say by asking and answering the next rhetorical question.

²⁴⁶ Ἐρεῖς μοι οὖν τί οὖν ἔτι μέμφεται; τῷ γὰρ βουλήματι αὐτοῦ τίς ἀνθέστηκεν – Now Paul asks another vital and obvious question. How can God hold people accountable for their choices if He is the One who ultimately determines their choices as to whether or not they qualify for His mercy or His judgment? How can He condemn human beings who cannot “resist His will” that causes their choices to rebel against Him?

In other words, does it really make sense and is it even right that God is the Author of all human beings and all their decisions in life, and then He judges, condemns, and punishes them for being evil—or even grants them mercy according to His choice and not theirs? If God makes people rebel against Him by means of His sovereign control over all the creation, including people's choices, then how is it possible for Him to say that they deserve to be punished for their rebellion? Or how can He choose that people choose to believe in Him and receive His grace and mercy? Paul's answer to these thorny questions is going to be how vital it is that we who are created understand the exact relationship between God's existence as the uncreated and transcendent Creator and our existence of human beings as created personal and individual beings.

²⁴⁷ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, μενούμενος σὺν τίς εἰ ὁ ἀνταποκρινόμενος τῷ θεῷ; μὴ ἔρεῖ τὸ πλάσμα τῷ πλάσαντι τί με ἐποίησας οὕτως – Paul has argued that the quality of God's relationship with people, their eternal destiny, and their daily human choices are all three *ultimately* dependent on God's plans and purposes, not on them. Therefore, it would seem to us, philosophically, that people

should not be held accountable for their choices, because God is the final cause of them. No one can “resist His will” and do other than what God causes them to do. However, Paul now argues that it is perfectly theological and rational that God can both cause people’s choices from His transcendent position as their Creator as well as hold them morally accountable for their choices. Yet this is in the midst of a human being’s actually defending himself against God’s transcendent causation of his choices—which ironically are being caused by God’s transcendent causation! In other words, any human being who argues against God’s holding him accountable for his choices is being caused to argue as a result of God’s causing him to do so.

Does this really make sense? Yes. On what basis? Paul uses the analogy of a potter who is shaping the lump of clay on his wheel by stating, “The thing which is molded will not say to the molder, ‘Why did you make me like this,’ will it?”

Thus, like an author who creates characters and their events, both good and evil, in the story which he is writing, so that the events stem from the characters’ personal choices, God does the same thing with human beings whom He has created. Therefore, in the final analysis, the story of God’s novel reveals certain truths about Himself—about His justice and mercy, the latter especially requiring that evil and unrighteousness exist. In other words, human and cosmic history is the story of God’s own self-expression. Nevertheless, there are things in our individual lives that do not relate directly to eternity but that do reveal God and His thoughtfulness, rationality, and creativity. These are things such as chess, tennis, architecture, art, etc.

Consequently, Paul is not rebuking his hypothetical questioner for asking the question about God’s holding people accountable for their choices. Instead, he is asking him to think carefully about the precise relationship between God and him. God is the molder/author, and he is the clay on God’s wheel/the character in God’s novel.

Again, in both cases, does it make sense that the lump of clay or character in the novel object, and the person is the clay/character? Does it really make sense for the clay/character to speak to the potter/author objects to how his Creator has made him and the fact that He is holding him accountable for his choices? Yes, it makes sense that the Creator would cause the person to do so. But it does not make sense that he is right so that he should not be held accountable for his choices. In other words, a person’s questioning his Creator is simply part of the story. And it further reveals just how in control and justified in holding the person accountable the Creator actually is!

[Isaiah 29:15](#) Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from Yahweh, and whose deeds are done in a dark place. And they say, “Who sees us?” or “Who knows us?” [29:16](#) You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, that what is made would say to its maker, “He did not make me”; or what is formed say to him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?

Paul partially quotes the verse of 29:16 above to the effect that Isaiah’s and his questions are rhetorical—that the clay has no right to complain to the potter about how he made him.

²⁴⁸ ἢ οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν ὁ κεραμεὺς τοῦ πηλοῦ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ φεράματος ποιῆσαι ὃ μὲν εἰς τιμὴν σκευὸς ὃ δὲ εἰς ἀτιμίαν – And so Paul asks the question directly, “Does not the potter of the clay have the right to make from the same lump one clay pot for honor and another clay pot for dishonor?”

Just as it is unthinkable that a piece of clay on a potter’s wheel would tell the potter what kind of object to make him, it is also unthinkable that we human beings would tell God what kind of person to make us—one who is granted eternal life according to His grace and mercy, i.e., an honorable clay pot like a vase which holds beautiful flowers, or one who is destroyed eternally according to His justice and condemnation, i.e., a dishonorable clay pot like a chamber pot.

God as the transcendent Creator is theologically, legally, morally, and rationally entitled to make some human beings who will enjoy His eternal mercy and some human beings who will experience His eternal destruction. The entire creation is all His creation, and He has the right to do with it and its every detail, including the decisions and choices of human beings, whatever He desires—just as a power has the right to shape the lump on his wheel exactly the way that he desires.

Therefore, it is also perfectly rational that this be the case, because whatever is theological must also be rational. Truth always makes sense, and if an idea does not make sense, then it is neither theological/biblical nor rational.

²⁴⁹ εἰ δὲ θέλων ὁ θεὸς ἐνδείξασθαι τὴν ὀργὴν καὶ γνωρίσαι τὸ δυνάτον αὐτοῦ ἤνεγκεν ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ σκευὴ ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν – Two options – 1) Paul is speaking of Jews in this context (cf. 9:1-13 especially), or 2) Paul is speaking of all human beings, Jews and Gentiles (cf. 9:14-18, 24 with the references to Pharaoh and Gentiles respectively). Originally, I was inclined to conclude that #1 makes more sense with the quotes from Hosea 1:10; 2:23, and Isaiah 10:22,23 in vs. 25-29. But I think that Paul is using these passages from the Old Testament prophets in regard to the Jews to make the point that God makes the same kind of choices among both Jews and Gentiles. Thus, Paul is saying that there are two kinds of sinful human beings (clay pots) according to God’s purposes. First, God has made some of the nation of Israel and some among the Gentiles to be fundamentally and continuously immoral to the end of their lives in order to display His justice, wrath, condemnation, and destruction of them. Therefore, throughout the history of Israel in the Old Testament and up to the time of Jesus (to which Paul must be referring since he is living the first century A.D.), God has patiently put up with their wholesale rebellion against Him until He is ready for them to die and proceed towards eternal destruction. And the same dynamic exists in His relationship with Gentiles.

²⁵⁰ καὶ ἵνα γνωρίσῃ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σκευὴ ἐλέους ἃ προητοίμασεν εἰς δόξαν – Paul then goes on to say that God’s patient endurance of both Jews and Gentiles whom He has made to disobey Him throughout their entire lives is in order that He may take other Jews and other Gentiles who are fundamentally immoral, but NOT CONTINUOUSLY throughout their whole lives on earth, and display the magnificence of His mercy and forgiveness towards them.

These latter people were always slated by God and His sovereign choice to reach eternal life and an existence of moral perfection, which is their glory and magnificence. And there will eventually be some Jews who will be mortal but will become authentic believers during the millennial kingdom. They will experience God’s and Jesus’ glory until they die and achieve

²⁵⁶ καὶ καθὼς προείρηκεν Ἡσαΐας· εἰ μὴ κύριος σαβαὼθ ἐγκατέλιπεν ἡμῖν σπέρμα, ὡς Σόδομα ἂν ἐγενήθημεν καὶ ὡς

Γόμορρα ἂν ὁμοιώθημεν – Here Paul quotes Isaiah 1:9 where the prophet admits that God could easily have destroyed the entire Jewish kingdom of Judah for their rebellion against him in the 8th century B.C., just as God could have destroyed all the Jews at any time during their history (cf. Exodus 32). But, again, His sovereign choice was to keep the nation of Israel alive, even if it was not fully intact as a kingdom of true Jews with changed inwardness, and even on occasion they have been dispersed from the land. God always has His Abrahamic promises in mind, that He will eventually completely fulfill them with respect to the Jews. Therefore, any dismantling of the Jewish people spiritually or physically only provides further evidence as to how far God is willing to go in judging and disciplining them before He eventually fulfills His promise and unifies them on the land of Israel with changed hearts and under the rule of their Messiah and Davidic king.

The fulfillment of His promises, however, will be on the basis of His own independent and personal choices, not on the basis of the Jews' choices.

Other nations such as those of the Canaanites have come and gone. But somehow the Jews have stuck around in history and persevered through all attempts by Satan and his followers (e.g., Hitler) to destroy them. How has this happened? By God's sovereign protection of them even though most of them have rejected Him as evidenced in the last 2,000 years by their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah.

Isaiah 1:9 Unless Yahweh of hosts had left us a few survivors, we would be like Sodom, we would be like Gomorrah (καὶ εἰ μὴ κύριος σαβαωθ ἐγκατέλιπεν ἡμῖν σπέρμα, ὥς Σοδομα ἂν ἐγενήθημεν καὶ ὥς Γομορρα ἂν ὁμοιώθημεν).

The "seed" of Isaiah 1:9 is the same as the "remnant" of Isaiah 10:22,23—the sub-group of Jews who fulfill God's requirement of their all having changed hearts and demonstrating authentic belief and obedience.

But, again, this is also in the light of God's taking a sub-group of Gentiles, all of whom are not ethnically God's chosen people, and turning them into changed of heart believers like their Jewish counterparts. Therefore, what God does with the remnant of Jews in comparison to the whole Jewish nation is what God does to a sub-group of Gentiles in comparison to both the Jews who remain unbelievers and the Gentiles who remain unbelievers.

²⁵⁷ Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ὅτι ἔθνη τὰ μὴ διώκοντα δικαιοσύνην κατέλαβεν δικαιοσύνην, δικαιοσύνην δὲ τὴν ἐκ πίστεως – In light of how God has dealt with the Gentiles, as implied in what Paul has said to the Roman Gentile Christians in chapters 1-8, and how He has dealt with both the Jews and the Gentiles as described in Romans 9:1-29, Paul now states that the upshot of God's sovereign design of both people groups as to their moral and heart condition during their lives and then their eternal destinies is that Gentiles have become acceptable to God without their even searching for this.

God made the Mosaic Covenant with the Jews, and they have made attempts to be acceptable to God, but here are Gentiles in Rome who formerly knew very little if nothing about the Jewish God, and look what has happened. They have become bona fide followers of the Jewish Messiah Jesus and are more acceptable to God than most of His own people, the Jews as the ethnic group with whom He made the specific promise in Genesis 12:1-3 of their becoming a "great nation." Thus, God has intended Gentiles to be clay pots of mercy and has changed their inner subjectivity, causing them to believe in the Jesus, so that they have obtained *dikaioṣunay*, justification, before God by virtue of their belief in Jesus as the Messiah—because somebody taught them in Rome about him and they have become authentic believers, just as Paul is an authentic believer.

²⁵⁸ Ἰσραὴλ δὲ διώκων νόμον δικαιοσύνης εἰς νόμον οὐκ ἔφθασεν – In contrast to the Gentiles who have become acceptable to God by their authentic belief, Paul says that Jews, members of the people group who ought to be acceptable because God has paid so much attention to them, have worked hard to impress God and earn His acceptance through their obedience to the OT and specifically the Mosaic Covenant. But they did not achieve justification, because they did not do what the Covenant actually requires (cf. Deuteronomy 10:16 and chapter 30), which is changed subjectivity and a circumcised heart that then leads to humble belief in God (and in Jesus after his first appearance) and obedience to the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Leviticus 18:5 – "by which a man may live if he does them [God's social and religious customs that He required of the Jews, His "statues" and "judgments"].")

Deuteronomy 10:12 "Now, Israel, what does Yahweh your God require from you, but to fear Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, **13** and to keep Yahweh's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? **14** Behold, to Yahweh your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. **15** Yet on your fathers did Yahweh set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day. **16** **So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.**"

Thus, the Jews of Paul's day are striving after the Mosaic Covenant that could bring them justification if they had changed hearts and exhibited authentic belief. But did not arrive at what the Covenant requires—belief.

²⁵⁹ διὰ τί; ὅτι οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἀλλ' ὥς ἐξ ἔργων προσέκοψαν τῷ λίθῳ τοῦ προσκόμματος – Here Paul states the case of the Jews explicitly. These are the Jews who have had the mentality that a person makes himself worthy of God's acceptance, forgiveness, and blessings by his outward (outside his heart commitments which can be changed only by God) performance of God's requirements in the Mosaic Covenant. This is instead of "belief," which by definition begins from God's grace and results in a person's believing God's truth that he is a sinner who must repent and as a result receives justification only by God's sovereign grace, thus never at any moment thinking that he is worthy of anything good from God.

Thus the Jews, who have had the "earn" mentality, tripped right over God's message in the OT to the effect that it is He and His grace that creates the proper qualification of belief/obedience in a human being in a sinful human being when He changes their hearts and which results in *dikaioṣunay* and eternal mercy/life.

²⁶⁰ καθὼς γέγραπται· ἰδοὺ τίθημι ἐν Σιών λίθον προσκόμματος καὶ πέτραν σκανδάλου, καὶ ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ καταισχυνθήσεται – cf. 1 Peter 2:8. God declares in Isaiah 8 that He will be a stumbling block to the unbelieving Jews of both the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah. However, just as Paul says in Romans 5:5 that the genuine

believer will not be ashamed of waiting confidently for immortality and moral perfection in the future because God will certainly make sure he obtains them, God says in Isaiah 8 that those who do not trip over His grace and the depth of their sinfulness will likewise not become ashamed.

Thus, Paul is saying that Jews have always stumbled over exactly what God is saying to them through the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants—that it is He alone who can solve their problem of sin by working within them and in their hearts and minds, so that they have made up their own false religion with God’s statements and actions in the Bible. While it is tempting to think that the stumbling stone is Jesus himself, in Isaiah 8 it is God as a metonymy, i.e., the combination of His grace and His causing people to grasp the depth of their sinfulness, both which indicate that a person can do nothing in and of himself to qualify for God’s acceptance, approval, and mercy. The Jews have failed to grasp how sinful they really are and therefore how much they need for God to initiate in their hearts and cause them to perform authentic belief and obedience. Instead, the Jews have tried to make themselves worthy of God’s blessing through their choices and efforts to obey the Mosaic Covenant.

The same is certainly true of “Christians,” who use biblical words and language to create their own false Christianity and try to impress God with their works, even while claiming that they are Protestants who are justified by faith and grace alone. Modern sinners who claim to be Christians can fake Christianity just as easily as the Jews have attempted to fake authentic Judaism.

²⁶¹ Ἀδελφοί, ἡ μὲν εὐδοκία τῆς ἐμῆς καρδίας καὶ ἡ δέησις πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν εἰς σωτηρίαν – Once again, like his lament at the beginning of chapter 9, Paul expresses his own heartfelt desire for his fellow Jews that they achieve God’s salvation from their sin and His condemnation, even in line with God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 to make of his descendants a “great nation” and of course in line with His promise to bless with eternal life anyone who imitates the belief of Abraham.

²⁶² μαρτυρῶ γὰρ αὐτοῖς ὅτι ζῆλον θεοῦ ἔχουσιν ἀλλ’ οὐ κατ’ ἐπίγνωσιν – Here Paul makes a revealing but chilling statement. The Jews can look as though they are wholeheartedly committed to obeying God (“they have a zeal for God”), but they are not. They are striving after obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Yet, they lack the “proper understanding” of their sinfulness and God’s grace.

This of course could be true of modern “Christians” who also have not properly grasped the biblical theology of sin and grace. Just because someone says that they are committed to God and demonstrate any level of religious activity to prove it does not mean that they have a correct understanding of God and are exercising authentic belief.

²⁶³ ἀγνοοῦντες γὰρ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην καὶ τὴν ἰδίαν δικαιοσύνην ζητοῦντες στήσαι, τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ὑπετάγησαν – Thus, Paul concludes that the Jews’ have taken the biblical message of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, which describes how to become acceptable by God, and distorted it, which means that they have made up their own religion using biblical terminology—which is altogether too easy for sinful human beings to do.

And thus God is their stumbling block (cf. 9:33). They have heard God, but they have not really *heard* God. His words are in their heads, but the truth of the ideas is not. As a result, they have come up with a different truth from the Bible itself. They are not submitting to the way that God says in the Bible that He justifies and saves people.

This is why it is so important that we humbly think very carefully about our study of the Bible and constantly recheck our thinking about the Bible in order to get as close as possible to an accurate interpretation of the Bible.

²⁶⁴ τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστευόντι – Many English Bibles translate the first part of this verse as “Christ is the end of the law,” which makes it sound as though the relevance of the Mosaic Covenant for the Jews comes to an end once Jesus as the Messiah has appeared, so that he therefore replaces the Covenant, resulting in the Jews’ no longer needing to pay attention to it at all. Therefore, the Jews become just like the Gentiles as people of the New Covenant who concern themselves with Jesus only and not with Moses and his covenant. This could (or also should) lead to our concluding that followers of Jesus, the “church” made up of both Jews and Gentiles, become the new “Israel” and replace the Jews as the chosen people of God, allowing us to read the statements regarding the nation of Israel and the land of Israel in the OT prophets as now applying to heaven and the eternal inheritance of the church.

In contrast, the Complete Jewish Bible translates the first part of this verse as “For the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah,” which I think makes more sense. While τέλος can refer to the end or conclusion of something, it can also refer to what someone hopes to achieve, which does not necessarily bring the end of it, but only the finish line with its still existing. Again, I think that Paul is indicating that God’s purpose for the Mosaic Covenant is to lead a person to authentic belief in the Messiah Jesus just as much as the apostolic message of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah is intended to do so. This is to say that a proper understanding of the Mosaic Covenant should teach a Jew that the goal of offering bulls and goats to God is to look for another, indeed, a human sacrifice to God that will become the basis for God’s forgiveness and mercy into eternity. The Jew should look at his animal sacrifices and automatically believe in Jesus as the Messiah and his high priest once he has appeared in human history. Thus, the latter, belief in the Messiah, is now the touchstone of authentic biblical spirituality, so that if a Jew who is hard after following the Mosaic Covenant does not segue naturally to belief in Jesus, then it reveals that he does not correctly understand the Mosaic Covenant and has most likely made up his own religion using its biblical terminology.

As Paul has already stated at the end of chapter two and now will go on to point out again, it is the Jew with a circumcised heart by God who not only speaks of his belief in God and obedience to the covenant but then who can also move on to speak of his belief in Jesus the Messiah and his obedience to him. This also means that the requirement for sinners, Jews or Gentiles, in OT times or NT times, to acquire God’s blessings of either participating in the “great nation” of Abraham’s physical descendants or obtaining eternal life has always been the same—a changed heart by God Himself and the resultant belief and obedience by someone who is still a sinner until God transforms all believers into eternal and morally perfect beings when Jesus returns or after death during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

Another way to say this is that a Jew was required by God to have a circumcised heart and to obey the Mosaic Covenant with

authentic belief as the lead up to obeying Jesus with authentic belief once he arrived. In this way, the Jews continues to obey the Mosaic Covenant appropriately while adding authentic obedience to Jesus when he understands that the animal sacrifices that he continues to offer to God are intended to point to Jesus' sacrifice and intercession as high priest.

²⁶⁵ Μωϋσῆς γὰρ γράφει τὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ τοῦ νόμου ὅτι ὁ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς – In this verse, Paul states very succinctly how justification by means of the Mosaic Covenant can occur. It is by the same mechanism and methodology as the by means of the New Covenant and Jesus can occur—that someone “does the things” in the Mosaic Covenant. He is quoting Moses in Leviticus 18:5 that a proper obedience to (and therefore understanding of) the Mosaic Covenant leads a Jew to “do the things” of the covenant. And what things are these. Leviticus 18:5 labels them as “all the statutes and all the judgments” of the covenant, which is to say all 613 commandments which God lays out in the Mosaic Covenant from Exodus 19 through the last chapter of Deuteronomy.

Both God and Paul state with Leviticus 18:5 that a Jew “shall live” if he “does” the things of the Mosaic Covenant. In other words, God's gift of life, even eternal life, comes to the Jew who properly obeys the Mosaic Covenant, which is a shocking revelation to anyone who has thought that it is only doing what Jesus has instructed will gain eternal salvation for a Jew (or a Gentile).

In other words, proper obedience to the Mosaic Covenant brings life, the same thing the gospel of Jesus does. And life includes God's acceptance, forgiveness, and blessings for all eternity. Therefore, God meant in Leviticus that failure to be condemned by God comes not specifically from “practicing” God's statutes, and he was not requiring that the Jews become morally perfect to achieve salvation and life. Instead, He was requiring that they become the kind of people who perform His commandments, even all 613 of them, with changed inwardness according to Deuteronomy 10:16 and chapter 30.

Leviticus 18:5 “So you shall keep My statutes (שְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־חֻקֵּי) (πάντα τὰ προστάγματα μου) and My judgments (שְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־דִּבְרֵי) (καὶ πάντα τὰ κρίματά μου), by which a man may live (וְיָחִי) (ὁ ποιήσας ἄνθρωπος ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς) if he does them; I am Yahweh.”

Deuteronomy 10:16 “So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.”

Deuteronomy 30:6 “Moreover Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.”

²⁶⁶ ἡ δὲ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη οὕτως λέγει· μὴ εἴπῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου· τίς ἀναβήσεται εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν; τοῦτ' ἔστιν Χριστὸν καταγαγεῖν – Paul now shows in 10:6,7 what demonstrates a lack of understanding of the Mosaic Covenant through the two questions in Deuteronomy that any individual Jew might ask. For one of them to ask if there is someone available to go to the extremes of the creation and bring back the key to his obeying the covenant properly, when as is implied the key is right there in the text, i.e., that it is a matter of the Jew's heart, is like asking who will go to the same extremes to reveal the Messiah—when he is right there in human history in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and it is also a matter of one's heart in responding with belief in him.

In this way, Paul exploits Moses' point in Deuteronomy 30:11-14 that obedience to the Mosaic Covenant is a matter of a Jew's heart that God has circumcised and says that it is the same for any one Jew and anyone else in regard to the Messiah. Instead, the tendency is for a Jew to think that his religious performance, that could include his ascending into heaven or crossing the ocean to demonstrate how wonderfully committed to obeying God he is, is what pleases God and makes him worthy of His blessings and promises—including causing the Messiah to appear.

It is like those Jews who claim that when the entire nation of Israel finally follows perfectly all 613 commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, then the Messiah will come. They will bring the Messiah down from heaven. In addition, they will bring him up from the dead—so to speak. God is waiting for the Jews to obey Him perfectly and then He will cause the Messiah to appear and rescue them from their earthly enemies.

Paul is saying that the condition that God requires is much simpler than this. It is a matter of God's changing a sinful Jew's heart and causing him to believe in Him and in the Messiah—all by His grace and the purpose of His choice. And this is something that the Jew can do even while he obeys the Mosaic Covenant. It has nothing to do with just his obedience to the commandments of the covenant, but with the condition of his heart as a humble penitent before God through His grace.

And Paul begins his reference to the OT by quoting the first part of Deuteronomy 9:4, a passage where Moses suggests that the an individual Jew will think that God is giving him and the nation of Israel the land of Canaan because of how righteous they all are—again, that they deserve the land because of their marvelous obedience to God. Instead, God takes the land from wicked and evil people and gives it to people who are equally sinful but who are also required to change their hearts and express authentic belief and obedience towards Him—which the Jews have failed to do so far in history, which is why they keep getting driven off the land until Jesus returns.

Deuteronomy 9:4 “Do not say in your heart (μὴ εἴπῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου) when Yahweh your God has driven them out before you, ‘Because of my righteousness Yahweh has brought me in to possess this land,’ but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that Yahweh is dispossessing them before you.”

Deuteronomy 30:11 “For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. **12** It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us (τίς ἀναβήσεται ἡμῖν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν) to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ **13** Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ **14** But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.”

In the first passage, Moses wants each Israelite to realize that his righteous behavior God is not making himself and his fellow

Jews worthy of the land which God is giving to them. Instead, the evil practices of its indigenous peoples, the Canaanites, has reached the point where God desires to do away with them and replace them with the Israelites. In the second passage, Moses is teaching the people of Israel to realize that obeying the Mosaic Covenant, all 613 of its commandments, is not impossible for sinful human beings like them. Instead, it is a matter of their hearts, of their changed hearts that is most important that will then lead to their demonstrating authentic belief in God and pursuing genuine obedience to Him under the covenant.

²⁶⁷ ἢ τίς καταβήσεται εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον; τοῦτ' ἔστιν Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναγαγεῖν – Same idea as the previous verse. The question, “Who will descend into the abyss?” is not in the OT. So Paul is referring to Jesus’ actual death. It is also though the same individual Jew is asking what great religious act can he perform to earn Jesus’ being raised from the dead in order for him to complete his responsibility of rescuing him from his and Israel’s earthly enemies? There is no such great religious act. Instead, God simply works within the hearts and minds of individual Jews according to the purpose of His grace, so that eventually an entire generation of Jews and successive generations of Jews become the recipients of the fulfillment of His promises—along with individual Jews who became authentic believers in history.

²⁶⁸ ἀλλὰ τί λέγει; ἐγγὺς σου τὸ ῥῆμά ἐστιν ἐν τῷ στόματί σου καὶ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως ὁ κηρύσσομεν – Just as Moses says in Deuteronomy 30 that no Israelite should fret about getting a total of all 613 commandments of the Mosaic Covenant in order to have them at his fingertips so as to be able to obey God as perfectly as possible in order to impress Him and even make himself worthy of His blessings and promises, neither should anyone fret about performing religious actions in order to give God the motivation to send the Messiah right in front of him.

Instead, Deuteronomy 30:14 states the way to please and obey God. It is to take the message of truth which God has provided and to have it in both one’s mouth and one’s heart, which is to say that God is concerned first with a sinful Jew’s inwardness and second with his outward performance of all the commandments in the Mosaic Covenant.

And Paul is saying the same thing about how a sinful Jew should respond to the information about Jesus as the Messiah. It is a matter of hearing and believing the truth of this “message” and information, not a matter of outwardly following the Mosaic Covenant. In other words, if a sinful Jew authentically believes the truth of the Mosaic Covenant, then he will also believe the truth of Jesus as the Messiah. This will allow him to have a “zeal for God” with good “understanding,” because he will be believing “the message of belief,” i.e., the message which calls for authentic, inward belief and not outward, religious performance.

Jesus has appeared historically as Jesus of Nazareth, and now it is simply a matter of believing the truth of him as God has revealed it. The issue is the condition of one’s heart and thus having a heart of *belief* that is properly oriented towards God. There is no intricate key to gaining God’s acceptance through obedience to the Mosaic Covenant that will then cause Him to send the Messiah in response to the Jews’ magnificent obedience to God and the covenant. There is only belief in the clear truth which God has exposed historically, particularly Jesus as the Messiah, which results in the simplicity of repentance, belief, and obedience to morality from a humble position of God’s grace. It does not result in building a religion that impresses God to the degree that He pays a person first with the sending of the Messiah and then with eternal life because he has earned it.

Deuteronomy 30:14 “But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it (ἔστιν σου ἐγγὺς τὸ ῥῆμα σφόδρα ἐν τῷ στόματί σου καὶ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου καὶ ἐν ταῖς χερσίν σου αὐτὸ ποιεῖν).”

²⁶⁹ ὅτι ἐάν ὁμολογήσῃς ἐν τῷ στόματί σου κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ πιστεύσῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ὅτι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν, σωθήσῃ – Again, Paul states the obvious—that following the Mosaic Covenant in order to earn God’s forgiveness is not the correct method to gain God’s acceptance and blessings, but simply taking the clear information of history and now the apostolic message that leads to believing in Jesus as one’s Master and Messiah is what rescues any individual, sinful Jew (and Gentile) from God’s eternal condemnation so that he obtains eternal life.

Paul puts it in terms of confessing “in [one]s mouth the Lord Jesus” and believing “in [one]s heart that God raised him from the dead.” The first is to internalize intellectually the role of Jesus as Messiah, Master, and Savior. The second is to internalize with a changed heart the fact that Jesus’ death and resurrection were both vital to his fulfilling his role as Messiah, Master, and Savior. This is obviously radically different from the traditional understanding of the Messiah from the Jews’ study of the OT where they believed that he would promote the Mosaic Covenant as the center of any Jew’s relationship with God and also destroy Israel’s earthly enemies. That the final (? – or restoration of the line of) Jewish king(s) would be executed by the Jewish leadership and then rise from the dead in order to be the only fully effective propitiatory offering to God was not even on their intellectual radar. Implied is that verbal confession and heart belief require a circumcised and changed heart just as Moses points out in Deuteronomy 30 that proper obedience to the Mosaic Covenant require them too. Implied also is that Jesus and not the Mosaic Covenant is the means to eternal salvation—because of his death and resurrection as a propitiatory offering to God. The Jews most likely believed that the Messiah would promote obedience to the Mosaic Covenant as the means to obtaining all God’s blessings, whether being a part of the great nation of Israel or eternal life with Abraham. But Jesus demonstrated by his death and resurrection that he is the only means to these and basis for them.

²⁷⁰ καρδιά γὰρ πιστεύεται εἰς δικαιοσύνην, στόματι δὲ ὁμολογεῖται εἰς σωτηρίαν – Here Paul promotes the core idea of the biblical message, that it is at the level of a person’s heart commitments that the proper condition for receiving the fulfillment of God’s promise of the “great nation” of Israel and eternal salvation occurs. And of course Paul has also already made it clear that it is God alone who ultimately brings this about (cf. Romans 2:28,29 and Romans 9 through His “purpose according to choice”), just as Moses pointed out the same thing to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 30:1-6, especially v. 6, “Moreover, the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.” In addition, to embrace Jesus correctly is to take into account not just his life, but also his death and resurrection by which he qualified to become our king and high priest (cf. Romans 1:4).

Paul is not making a large distinction between justification and salvation, because certainly to have one is to have the other. To acquire a standing before God that will lead to eternal salvation is to have the guarantee through God's grace and faithfulness that God will certainly grant salvation to this person. And to believe the truth in one's heart is to be able to speak the truth from a position of authentic belief with one's mouth. A person can hardly do one without also doing the other—genuinely!!

In other words, biblical inwardness theologically leads to both justification and salvation.

²⁷¹ λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ κατασχυνθήσεται – Paul quotes from Isaiah 28:16 where God told both the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah around 722 B.C. that the Davidic Covenant, which they were not trusting in, will nevertheless become the cornerstone of the building comprised of His people, the authentically believing Jews. Thus, the Davidic Covenant is the “it” in this passage. Isaiah 28 is also referring to the fact that the Israelites had made a covenant with foreign empires to protect them from harm. However, God around 1,000 B.C. had already and will continue to make and keep the Davidic Covenant with the nation of Israel, which is all that they need for protection from their enemies. Therefore, by adding the word πᾶς at the beginning of the Isaiah 28:16 quote, Paul is alluding to the fact that both his Jewish readers and the Gentiles must simply be the kind of people who believe God with *their changed hearts* for His promises, which means even the Davidic Covenant and the final, Jewish Davidic king, Jesus of Nazareth. This is what Paul goes on to argue. Anyone who demonstrates belief of this kind will certainly not be embarrassed or ashamed when the outcome is God's eternal mercy and life.

Thus, the Davidic Covenant of Isaiah 28:16 becomes a metonymy for Jesus, the final king of this covenant, once he appears, so that the “it” here implies the “him” of Jesus.

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus says Adonai Yahweh, “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed (ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ μὴ κατασχυνθῇ).”

²⁷² οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν διαστολή Ἰουδαίου τε καὶ Ἑλλήνος, ὁ γὰρ αὐτὸς κύριος πάντων, πλουτῶν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἐπικαλουμένους αὐτόν – In the previous verse, Paul quoted Isaiah 28:16 to the effect that the Jew who genuinely believes in the Davidic Covenant will not be ashamed of doing so because it will theologically lead to participating in God's promises. But he also added the word πᾶς at the beginning. Now he explains the full significance of this word “everyone,” that it includes both Jews and Gentiles.

Paul now says explicitly that “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek” in God's eyes. God has chosen the Jews as a unique ethnic group, but this does not mean that they have a higher status as far as God's choosing sinners to obtain His salvation and eternal life. And this is because God is “Lord of all,” i.e., of all believers regardless of their ethnic group. And this is because God richly provides his grace, mediation, and salvation “towards all who call upon Him,” i.e., towards all who with changed hearts appeal to God for mercy and life through Jesus as their “Lord” and raised propitiatory offering after his death.

The inference from all that Paul has been arguing is that both Jews and Gentiles obtain an acceptable standing before God by means of their doing the same thing—believing (from a heart that has been changed by the grace of God). It is not that the Jew can point to his obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, and it is not that the Gentile can do this either (which would be a possible conclusion from reading the OT), but it is that both can point to what God has done to their subjectivity and changed it so as to orient them towards God, His truth, and Jesus at the level of the commitments of their hearts. If they both demonstrate this through humility, repentance, moral pursuit, and perseverance of these in the midst of and after suffering the normal afflictions of this life, either from their own sin or through persecution and life as it presents itself to all human beings, then they present clear evidence for the authenticity of their belief. In this way, God also demonstrates that He is God of both Jews and Gentiles, even though He has chosen the Jews for a special and unique purpose within human history as Paul has been pointing out throughout Romans.

²⁷³ πᾶς γὰρ ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται – Paul now quotes Joel 2:32 which is speaking of the Jews at the end of history when God brings about His final judgment and discipline of the Jews. “Everyone [of the Jews] who will call upon” God for salvation from His judgment and destruction will obtain His saving them. But this is the point, if calling out to God with genuine inwardness and belief results in salvation from God, then the fact that it is good enough for the Jews means that it is good enough for the Gentiles. Thus, the Jews become an object lesson for the Gentiles. God brings about earthly judgment of the Jews and yet saves some of them from both it and His eternal judgment and destruction. Gentiles should take note and also appeal to God for their eternal salvation.

Joel 2:32 “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of Yahweh will be delivered (καὶ ἔσται πᾶς ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται); for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as Yahweh has said, even among the survivors whom Yahweh calls.”

²⁷⁴ Πῶς οὖν ἐπικαλέσονται εἰς ὃν οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν; πῶς δὲ πιστεύσωσιν οἱ οὐκ ἤκουσαν; πῶς δὲ ἀκούσωσιν χωρὶς κηρύσσοντος – Here, in vs. 14 and 15, Paul wants to highlight and make explicit the process by which people, both Jews and Gentiles, become believers. The process is initiated and controlled by God for His own purposes, which Paul is describing as involving both Jews and Gentiles in the midst of the former being a unique ethnic group in human history. But God's purposes do not exclude the Gentiles, when it comes to sinners' acquiring the fulfillment of His promises, while His purposes also do not incorporate the entirety of the Jewish people. God's process for causing sinners to “call on Him” is to send “those who proclaim good news of good things” so that people may “hear” the good news and then “believe” the good news and then “call on” God for His mercy and salvation. To repeat, it starts with God and ends with God—because Paul has already argued that it is His “gracious choice” of specific sinners, both Jews and Gentiles, who embrace the good news and obtain mercy and salvation (cf. Romans 8:28-30,33; 9:11; 11:5-6). Human beings are not ultimately in control of this process. God is.

²⁷⁵ πῶς δὲ κηρύξωσιν ἐὰν μὴ ἀποσταλῶσιν; καθὼς γέγραπται· ὡς ὥραϊοι οἱ πόδες τῶν εὐαγγελιζομένων τὰ ἀγαθὰ – In Isaiah 52, God announces the good news of the restoration of the Jews to their land and to an experience of wealth and prosperity, which is what He promised in the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:1-3. Thus, the “good news” of Isaiah 52:7 is that ultimately of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 21 when Jesus returns, destroys Israel’s earthly enemies, and sets up the first stage of the Kingdom of God on the land of Israel. God predicts and guarantees that He will announce this good news of the “great nation” of Israel through human beings, and He is saying this to and in regard to the Israelites/Jews.

In addition, Paul quotes Isaiah 52:7 as something which was originally spoken to the Jews only, but has significance for the Gentiles, too, i.e., the Gentiles whom God has graciously chosen to announce the “good news” of Jesus as the Messiah through whom they acquire eternal mercy and salvation from God.

Isaiah 52:7 How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness (ὡς ὥρα ἐπὶ τῶν ὄρεων, ὡς πόδες εὐαγγελιζομένου ἀκοὴν εἰρήνης, ὡς εὐαγγελιζόμενος ἀγαθὰ), who announces salvation, and says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”

²⁷⁶ Ἀλλ’ οὐ πάντες ὑπήκουσαν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ. Ἡσαΐας γὰρ λέγει· κύριε, τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν – Paul quotes Isaiah 53:1 as to who has believed “our message,” when Isaiah 52 speaks of the fact that “many nations...will understand” the role and message of God’s “servant” whose “appearance” becomes “marred more than any man.” It makes the most sense that this “servant” is Jesus as the beaten and crucified Messiah who fulfills his role as Savior for the Jews and the Gentiles, leading to “our message” in 53:1 referring to the information that all the Gentiles and Jews embrace, namely Jesus as their king and savior. Therefore, when Paul says at the beginning of this verse in Romans, “However, not everyone obeyed the good news,” he means that not all of humanity, who have heard something about God, have been willing to embrace what God has presented as the wonderful good news for sinful people, especially the information about Jesus as the Messiah.

Paul stated at the beginning of chapter 9 that “not all from Israel are Israel,” that not every Jew ends up becoming a member of “Israel” as defined by those Jews who become authentic believers in God and who receive the fulfillment of God’s promises. Here, he quotes Isaiah 53:1 that says the same thing in question form, “Lord, who believed our report?” But now he is referring to both Jews and Gentiles, using the question from Isaiah to say that some Jews have believed and some Gentiles have also, but most of humanity have not.

Paul continues to teach in these three chapters of 9-11 that God is control of the process of people becoming believers (vs. 14,15) and He is in control of who becomes believers (by His gracious choice), resulting in the conclusion that God’s plans simply do not include everyone in the nation of Israel and everyone in the Gentile world believing His message. And Paul quotes the question of Isaiah 53:1 where the “our” refers to Jews and Gentiles to show this.

²⁷⁷ ἄρα ἡ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς, ἡ δὲ ἀκοὴ διὰ ῥήματος Χριστοῦ – Thus, Paul states explicitly that the dynamic in existence in his day is that authentic belief in God entails hearing the good news of the Messiah, which I think we can infer from he is saying goes back to the Old Testament and has been revealed in the very person of Jesus of Nazareth. The Messiah is at the center of the entire biblical documents, from Genesis through Revelation, so that authentic belief in God involves and includes belief in the Messiah—however much someone has learned about him at any time in human history, whether very little if we are talking about Adam and Eve, or very much for us now that we have the whole New Testament to study and absorb.

Thus, belief for a sinner is to some degree belief in the biblical Messiah. Isaiah 52 and 53 are all about him, too. But this is what the Jews are missing, because they are so focused (incorrectly) on Moses and the Mosaic Covenant. They need to move on to the Davidic and New Covenants and camp on them—with Jesus’ claims to be the Messiah as absolutely true.

²⁷⁸ ἀλλὰ λέγω, μὴ οὐκ ἤκουσαν; μενοῦνγε· εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἐξῆλθεν ὁ φθόγγος αὐτῶν καὶ εἰς τὰ πέρατα τῆς οἰκουμένης τὰ ῥήματα αὐτῶν – Can it be said that the Gentiles and OT Israelites did not hear enough about the Messiah, thus basically making it impossible for them to have proper belief?

Paul quotes Psalm 19:4 to say that, while the OT message was not always about the Messiah *per se*, the Israelites/Jews and Gentiles in the past have certainly had enough information about God to engage in proper belief. And, remarkably enough, the information came from the creation which speaks loudly and clearly in regard to the Creator (cf. Romans 1)—which is enough to convince a person that he needs to believe in God and thereby fulfill the condition He has placed on sinners in order to obtain eternal life and salvation.

Psalm 19:4 Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world (εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἐξῆλθεν ὁ φθόγγος αὐτῶν καὶ εἰς τὰ πέρατα τῆς οἰκουμένης τὰ ῥήματα αὐτῶν). In them He has placed a tent for the sun.

²⁷⁹ ἀλλὰ λέγω, μὴ Ἰσραὴλ οὐκ ἔγνω; πρῶτος Μωϋσῆς λέγει· ἐγὼ παραζηλώσω ὑμᾶς ἐπ’ οὐκ ἔθνη, ἐπ’ ἔθνη ἀσυνέτῳ παροργισθῶ ὑμᾶς – What is Paul asking in regard to what “Israel did not know?” I think in the context it has to be how history was going to proceed for both the OT Jews and the Gentiles—especially if the Jews refused to believe God and the truth which He was conveying to them. Should the Jews have been aware of what God was going to do with them and with the Gentiles in relation to the Jews’ Messiah? The answer is, “Yes.” Going all the way back to Moses around 1500 B.C., he was the first one to say explicitly that God would annoy the Jews and make them angry by means of an ethnic group, a nation outside the nation of Israel, which is to say the Gentiles, when they believe a message from God that those who are proclaiming it claim it to be from the God of Israel—a message that is clearly not the same one that the Jews themselves are embracing and claiming to be from God. In other words, the Jews will believe that the OT is saying X, while others (even Jews) are claiming that the OT says Y. This is going to be so annoying to the Jews that they believe they are completely in the right to squash the new message and even kill those who are proclaiming it.

I think, therefore, that both the Hebrew נִזְדַּק and the Greek παραζηλώω do not mean “make jealous” as we think of jealousy, that someone has something that I really want, and I am jealous of their having it when it is not possible for me to get it. Therefore,

these words mean the same thing as **עצב** and **παροργίζω**, to make someone angry simply because you are doing the wrong thing according to them, and this is really annoying to them. In Deuteronomy 32:21, Moses is saying that the Israelites are really going to annoy God and make Him angry with their worship of false gods, with the result that God is very much going to annoy them and make them angry when the Gentiles believe the truth, which the Jews think is a lie and a distortion of the biblical message which they have learned and to which they are assiduously and painstakingly adhering. We know that this is what happens when Paul starts proclaiming the message of Jesus as the Messiah and the Gentiles believe it and obey it. The book of Acts and Paul's letters indicate that the Jews get so upset at the apostles and Paul for teaching what they think is a false Messiah that their anger leads them to try to squash their message and even kill them. This means that they are not jealous per se, wanting what the Gentiles have when they cannot have it. Instead, they are angrily zealous for what they believe is the truth and attempt to eliminate the "false" message of the apostles and Paul and to eliminate those who are promoting this "false" message.

This means also that there was plenty of good information in OT times provided to the Jews (for example, the Mosaic Covenant and the whole OT Torah), but they still refused to believe the truth properly with genuine belief—because their hearts were so hard and they lacked changed hearts. And there was information enough in the OT to instruct the Jews in what God's plans and purposes were and are in regard to the Jews and the Gentiles. For example, and even "first," God through Moses said in Deuteronomy 32:31 that He would anger them as they angered Him to try to get them to think about what they are believing—that it is not in line with the Bible, so that eventually they will believe the truth all as a part of His plan for the Jews and the Gentiles, which Paul will explain more clearly in chapter 11. The implication of God's promises to Abraham is that the Gentiles will believe the message of Jesus as the Messiah that will lead eventually to the Jews believing this message as a whole group—on the land of Israel in the millennial kingdom under the rule of Jesus as their Messiah.

Deuteronomy 32:21 'They have made Me jealous (**יִצְבֵּנִי עַד**) (*αὐτοὶ παρεξήλωσάν με*) with what is not God; they have provoked Me to anger (**יִצְבֵּנִי עַד**) (*παρώργισάν με*) with their idols. So I will make them jealous (**יִצְבֵּנִי עַד**) (*καὶ γὰρ παραξήλωσω αὐτούς*) with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger (**יִצְבֵּנִי עַד**) (*παροργίσω αὐτούς*) with a foolish nation.'

²⁸⁰ **Ἡσαίας** δὲ ἀποτολμᾷ καὶ λέγει· εὗρέθην ἐν τοῖς ἐμὲ μὴ ζητοῦσιν, ἐμφανὴς ἐγενόμην τοῖς ἐμὲ μὴ ἐπερωτῶσιν – In order to interpret the last two verses of chapter ten, I need to consider the options for understanding Isaiah 65:1-2, which Paul quotes in these verses, and the options for understanding Romans 10:20-21. They read,

Isaiah 65:1 "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me (*Ἐμφανὴς ἐγενόμην τοῖς ἐμὲ μὴ ζητοῦσιν*); I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me (*εὗρέθην τοῖς ἐμὲ μὴ ἐπερωτῶσιν*). I said, 'Here am I, here am I,' to a nation which did not call on My name." **65:2** I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people (*ἐξεπέτασα τὰς χεῖράς μου ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν πρὸς λαὸν ἀπειθοῦντα καὶ ἀντιλέγοντα*), who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts."

The first option is that God is referring in v. 1 to the Gentiles, who, in their pagan idolatry, were not even seeking after God; and then, all of a sudden, they found Him—like the Gentiles to whom Paul proclaimed the message of Jesus in places such as Ephesus and Corinth, while v. 2 is referring to the Jews, who remained stubborn in their hard-heartedness—like the Jews in various places Paul visited and encountered great resistance to Jesus as the Messiah from the Jews.

The second option is that God is referring in both v. 1 and v. 2 to the Jews, who eventually found God after their period of time of hard-heartedness.

Then, there are two options for understanding Romans 10:20-21—

The first option is that v. 20 refers to the Gentiles as explained above (even though Paul mixes the Greek words of the Septuagint of Isaiah 65:1), while v. 21 refers to the Jews as explained above. This would then be exactly in line with option #1 for the two Isaiah verses OR as an argument from the Jews to the Gentiles in v. 20 and an argument from the Jews to the Jews in v. 21.

The second option is that both v. 20 and v. 21 refer to the Jews as in line with option #2 above for the two Isaiah verses.

I think that option #1 for both Isaiah 65:1-2 and Romans 10:20-21 makes the most sense, given the language in the two passages. For example, Paul says in v. 21, "Yet, to Israel He says,..." referring to God's statement in Isaiah 65:2, indicating more clearly that v. 20 is not an argument from the Jews to the Gentiles from Isaiah 65:1. And it makes sense that God would say of the Gentiles that they were not asking for Him, but He "permitted" (even caused!) them to seek and find Him—through some appropriate means, such as the apostle Paul's announcing Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. In addition, Isaiah 65:2 surely sounds like an indictment of the Jews in Isaiah's day and Jesus' and Paul's day—in contrast to what Paul was seeing among the Gentiles in places like Psidian Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth.

Therefore, the boldness of Isaiah in 65:1 is that God boldly declares that Gentiles are going to receive the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham—through their belief in the truth about Him as implied and argued by Paul throughout his letter to the Roman Gentile Christians.

²⁸¹ πρὸς δὲ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ λέγει· ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν ἐξεπέτασα τὰς χεῖράς μου πρὸς λαὸν ἀπειθοῦντα καὶ ἀντιλέγοντα – Then Paul refers to the Jews here in v. 21, that the Jews have remained stubbornly disobedient in their refusal to believe God properly—just as Isaiah 65:2 predicted.

Thus, Paul ends chapter 10 where he began in 9:30ff., that God has brought about authentic belief among the Gentiles as He planned, while the Jews have remained stubbornly unbelieving as He planned, which fills out the picture of God's right and prerogative to make certain people clay pots of mercy and other people clay pots of wrath.

Yet, Paul will go in chapter 11 to state categorically that God has not rejected the Jews and is not finished with them—and His fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make his physical descendants the most powerful nation in all human history.

²⁸² Λέγω οὖν, μὴ ἀπόσωτο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ; μὴ γένοιτο· καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ Ἰσραηλίτης εἰμί, ἐκ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ, φυλῆς Βενιαμὴν – Paul has just argued that God has changed the hearts of Gentiles who have become believers in Him and His truth, while the Jews have remained stubborn and obstinate in their hearts. Now he asks a very important question, “Has God abandoned the Jews with His fulfilling His plans for Gentiles to become believers in the Jewish Messiah in light of the Jews having rejected their Messiah?” This would seem to make sense one level, that after all the times that God has disciplined the nation of Israel and urged them to return to Him and obey Him with circumcised hearts, the final straw could have been their rejecting Jesus and even executing him on the cross. Couldn’t we see God finally reaching the end of His patience and declaring that He was done with the Jews and was now moving on to the Gentiles who, by predominantly become the “church” of the New Testament, also became His new chosen people to whom He would now fulfill the promises that He made to Abraham?

But Paul’s answer to his question is, “No.” And his first example of why it is true that God has not rejected the Jews is himself! Paul is a Jew, and look what God has done to him. He has made him a believer in Jesus the Messiah. While we might think that one Jewish believer in the Jewish Messiah is no big deal, especially while there have been so many Gentiles who have become believers, I think that Paul is saying that his own changed heart, conversion, and belief in Jesus among all the Jews is actually clear evidence that God is still in the process of fulfilling His promises to them.

Thus, Paul provides his Jewish credentials as a descendant of Abraham, but he must mean through Isaac and Jacob. And he refers to this latter person who is the grandson of Abraham by saying that he is a member of the tribe of Benjamin, Jacob’s youngest son.

By the way, this is in line with what Paul argued at the beginning of chapter 9, that not all those who are from Jacob, there are not Israel, i.e., Jews who have changed hearts. Indeed, Paul is one of those who is both—a descendant of Jacob through his youngest son, Benjamin, and a changed of heart believer in Jesus the Messiah (indeed, an apostle of Jesus!).

²⁸³ οὐκ ἀπόσωτο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ὃν προέγνω. ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε ἐν Ἡλίας τί λέγει ἡ γραφή, ὡς ἐντυγχάνει τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ – Thus, Paul can state that Jews have become believers whom God previously planned for them to become such, which, again, implies what he said in 9:6, that “as for all those who are from Israel [Jacob], these are not Israel [believing Jews who will participate in the restored Kingdom of Israel—as described in Revelation 20]. This is to say that God knew ahead of time which Jews He would change inwardly, i.e., who would be clay pots of mercy, even among the Jews, because it is also true that not all Jews are true Jews.

And Paul quotes a portion of Psalm 94:14, where God says that He will judge and destroy the Gentiles who speak ill of His chosen people, the Jews, and who even seek to hurt and harm them by killing widows and orphans. Indeed, He “will not abandon His people,” the Jews, and “He will not forsake” them, His “inheritance.” The Jews have been and continue to be the chosen people of God, God’s earthly inheritance, even if it is true that only some of them become authentic believers in God when He changes their hearts.

Psalm 94:14 For Yahweh will not abandon His people (ὅτι οὐκ ἀπόσεται κύριος τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ), nor will He forsake His inheritance.

And Paul goes on in this verse to cite Elijah’s experience as another example of God’s control of which Jews become acceptable to Him in the midst of other Jews who have rejected Him.

²⁸⁴ κύριε, τοὺς προφῆτας σου ἀπέκτειναν, τὰ θυσιαστήρια σου κατέσκαψαν. καὶ γὰρ ὑπελείφθην μόνος καὶ ζητοῦσιν τὴν ψυχὴν μου – Paul quotes Elijah in 1 Kings 19:10,14 when he laments that he firmly believes that all the Jews around him are in full rebellion against God, thus seeking even to kill him. Elijah has recently killed the prophets of Baal and Jezebel, Ahab’s wife, swears that she will kill him, so that he flees all the way to Mt. Horeb. An angel asks him what he is doing there, and he responds in the two verses of 1 Kings.

1 Kings 19:10 and 14 He said, “I have been very zealous for Yahweh, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away (ἃ θυσιαστήρια σου κατέσκαψαν καὶ τοὺς προφῆτας σου ἀπέκτειναν ἐν ῥομφαίᾳ, καὶ ὑπολείμμαι ἐγὼ μονώτατος, καὶ ζητοῦσι τὴν ψυχὴν μου λαβεῖν αὐτήν).”

The situation looks bleak for Elijah, much the way it does to Paul—to the extent that he said at the beginning of chapter 9 that he would be willing to be assigned to destruction in place of all the Jews who currently were rejecting their own Messiah, even though many of them want him dead!!

²⁸⁵ ἀλλὰ τί λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ χρηματισμός; κατέλιπον ἐμαυτῷ ἑπτακισχιλίους ἄνδρας, οἵτινες οὐκ ἔκαμψαν γόνυ τῇ Βάαλ – Paul asks, “What is the divine response” to the desperate Elijah? That he is wrong in his assessment of the spiritual condition of Israel. It may look as though every other Jew besides him is an abject rebel against God and out to kill him. But the truth is, as Paul paraphrases 1 Kings 19:18, that God has sovereignly caused 7,000 Jews (or so, assuming this is not a completely accurate number) to be changed of heart authentic believers, even if Elijah cannot readily see them. Again, it is God who is in control of this, so that He is working among the Jews even if others do not clearly see this. Therefore, at a time when it appeared as though God had abandoned the Jews, He had not, implying of course that He never will.

1 Kings 19:18 “Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him (καὶ καταλείψεις ἐν Ἰσραὴλ ἑπτὰ χιλιάδας ἀνδρῶν, πάντα γόνατα, ἃ οὐκ ὠκλάσαν γόνυ τῷ Βααλ).”

Therefore, the bleak situation for Elijah is the bleak situation for the Jews of Paul’s day, that God always has a small number of them who are genuine in their belief. And I think that this is in the midst of His leading history towards His fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make them the most powerful nation in human history when Jesus returns—as Paul goes on to imply.

²⁸⁶ οὕτως οὖν καὶ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ λείμμα κατ’ ἐκλογὴν χάριτος γέγονεν – Indeed, Paul now draws the natural and rational conclusion from God’s statement to Elijah in the 9th century B.C. that in his own day God has established a small group of Jews

as genuine believers, even believers in Jesus the Messiah (of which Paul is one). And this work of God is according to His own independent decision and choice to express His grace and mercy to undeserving sinful human beings—in this case, to Jews as He moves towards the end of the present age when Jesus will make his grand entrance at his return and establish the Kingdom of God on earth with a core group of believing Jews on the land of Israel who make up the first generation of Jews during the millennial kingdom.

This is why I translate οὕτως with “In the same manner,” which is to say, as God did in the 9th century B.C., so is He also doing in the 1st century A.D.—and by inference, so has He always done and will continue to do right up through the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord and Jesus’ return.

Again, God has not abandoned the Jews as His chosen people, for “not all those from Jacob” are not “Israel.” Only a portion of them are believing “Israel,” because nothing obligated God to change the hearts of all the Jews down through history.

²⁸⁷ εἰ δὲ χάριτι, οὐκέτι ἐξ ἔργων. ἐπεὶ ἡ χάρις οὐκέτι γίνεται χάρις – Paul more fully explains that the current Jews’ being authentic believers has had nothing to do with their outward actions (even “works” of obedience to the Mosaic Covenant) whereby they have made themselves worthy of God’s acceptance and mercy. In other words, grace is the very antithesis of earning and motivating God to act on one’s behalf through moral or obedient actions. God’s activity of grace is based on His independent choice as the transcendent storyteller and not on anything that His creatures do to impress Him and cause Him to respond to them in a loving and merciful manner.

Therefore, God chooses to change the hearts of certain sinful human beings, including within the special ethnic group of His chosen people, the Jews. And thus by His grace, not on the basis of their religious or obedient actions, He inwardly changes them and they exhibit authentic belief, with the result that they obtain His eternal mercy and salvation.

²⁸⁸ Τί οὖν; ὃ ἐπιζητεῖ Ἰσραὴλ, τοῦτο οὐκ ἐπέτυχεν, ἡ δὲ ἐκλογὴ ἐπέτυχεν οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ ἐπωρώθησαν – What are the Jews seeking that they did and do “not obtain?” A standing before God of being acceptable and the blessing of Abraham, starting with their becoming a great nation and ending with their acquiring eternal life (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). As in 9:31ff., Paul reveals the fact that people can seek what God offers but not obtain it because some vital element is missing. In 9:31ff., the vital element was proper understanding of the Mosaic Covenant which leads to genuine belief and ultimately to belief in Jesus as the sacrificial offering to God that brings mercy and life.

Here the vital element is God’s sovereign choice of a human being, and in this case of a Jew. Thus, “the chosen obtained” justification before God by their authentic belief that comes as a result of a changed heart. But “the rest” of the Jews “were hardened.” God chooses to exercise His grace towards certain sinful Jews, and He chooses not to exercise this same grace to many other Jews. They did not obtain His acceptance, the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, and therefore justification. Therefore, they fell short of it and are falling short of it in Paul’s day—and in our day, until the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord and Jesus returns.

²⁸⁹ καθὼς γέγραπται· ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς πνεῦμα κατανύξεως, ὀφθαλμοὺς τοῦ μὴ βλέπειν καὶ ὦτα τοῦ μὴ ἀκούειν, ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας – Paul paraphrases Isaiah 29:10 and Deuteronomy 29:4 to the effect that it is God who has responded to the Jews’ innate sinfulness by preventing them from seeing the truth clearly and embracing it with genuine belief. It has been God’s sovereign choice which Jews are believers and which are unbelievers. He has made those Jews who have not and will not obtain what they are seeking, His blessings, hard of heart and unable to grasp the truth with authentic belief.

In Isaiah 29, God pronounces His judgment on Jerusalem and its inhabitants, that the nations will wage war against them.

However, God will judge and destroy these nations who turn against Him and His people, the Jews, while He has also made the Jews dull and stupid when it comes to believing and obeying Him properly.

In Deuteronomy 29, Moses encourages the Israelites to obey God through the covenant which He has made with them at Mt. Horeb, but he also admits that God has not changed all their hearts in order for them to do so. Indeed, God will judge and discipline them in the future when they disobey Him and the covenant. Yet, Moses says in chapter 30 that He will eventually circumcise their hearts and bring them into the land to fulfill His promise to them.

Again, God’s sovereign choices are all over the Bible as Paul has been pointing out in the three chapters.

[Isaiah 29:10](#) For Yahweh has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep (ὅτι πεπότικεν ὑμᾶς κύριος πνεύματι κατανύξεως). He has shut your eyes, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, the seers.

[Deuteronomy 29:4](#) “Yet to this day Yahweh has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear (καὶ ὀφθαλμοὺς βλέπειν καὶ ὦτα ἀκούειν ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης).”

²⁹⁰ καὶ Δαυὶδ λέγει· γεννηθῶ ἡ τράπεζα αὐτῶν εἰς παγίδα καὶ εἰς θήραν καὶ εἰς σκάνδαλον καὶ εἰς ἀνταπόδομα αὐτοῖς – Paul shows through this quote from Psalm 69:22,23 that “even David” adopted God’s perspective on certain Jews who are seeking to kill him, and he urged God to destroy his enemies and to prevent them from becoming authentic believers. Of course, David had the right to wish these things on people because he was the first Son of God and Anointed One (Messiah, Christ) as the king of Israel, serving as God’s proxy on the land and on the whole earth. Just as God calls for and brings about the destruction of His enemies, so does David as God’s representative in the creation.

Paul’s point is both that there were Jews in David’s day who were hostile to God and His “Messiah,” i.e., David, and David sought God’s salvation and encouraged Him to deal with his enemies in a just manner.

[Psalm 69:22](#) May their table before them become a snare; and when they are in peace, may it become a trap (γεννηθῶ ἡ τράπεζα αὐτῶν ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν εἰς παγίδα καὶ εἰς ἀνταπόδοσιν καὶ εἰς σκάνδαλον). [23](#) May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see, and make their loins shake continually (σκοτισθῶσαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῶν τοῦ μὴ βλέπειν καὶ τὸν νῶτον αὐτῶν διὰ παντὸς σύγκαμψον).

²⁹¹ σκοτισθῶσαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῶν τοῦ μὴ βλέπειν καὶ τὸν νῶτον αὐτῶν διὰ παντὸς σύγκαμψον –

²⁹² Λέγω οὖν, μὴ ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσιν; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τῷ αὐτῶν παραπτώματι ἡ σωτηρία τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εἰς τὸ παραζηλώσαι αὐτούς – Here is a key question from Paul, because someone could infer from all the bad things that he has said about the abject unbelief of so many Jews. Perhaps, they have stumbled to the point of falling completely out of favor with God, meaning they have rebelled against Him to the extent that they are no longer His chosen people as an ethnic group who once were included in the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. Has the Jews' rejection of God and Jesus the Messiah resulted in God's rejection of the Jews completely? Is He done with the Jews now and will turn to only the Gentiles (or at least just the "church," comprised of mostly Gentiles and a very few Jews) to be His people?

Paul's answer is, "No, not at all." Instead, Paul says that "through their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles in order to annoy them terribly." God is working out His OT plans and statements which Paul quoted in 10:19 (cf. Deuteronomy 32:31), where the design of history is first to annoy the Jews through the message of Jesus whom they rejected and its being taught by Jews like Paul and embraced by Gentiles to motivate them eventually to embrace their own Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, after watching the Gentiles embrace him. Again, they do not become jealous per se, but annoyed and angry at what they believe to be the wrong message of Jesus and their scriptures before they finally realize that the wrong message is the right message.

At the beginning of chapter 11, Paul used himself as a prime example of God's not having abandoned the Jews. How could Paul, a former persecutor of Christians, even become a Christian through the inward work of the Spirit of God if God has abandoned all Jews who have rejected Jesus as the Messiah? Here is a similar point, that the unbelief of so many Jews that culminated in their executing their own king, Jesus, will not deter God from fulfilling His promises to them eventually. In the NT it is through mainly the book of Revelation that we know that this will occur when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel during the time of his "1,000 year" reign, which will include the whole earth.

²⁹³ εἰ δὲ τὸ παράπτωμα αὐτῶν πλοῦτος κόσμος καὶ τὸ ἥτιμα αὐτῶν πλοῦτος ἔθνων, πόσῳ μᾶλλον τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτῶν – Paul indicates that the resultant effect of the Gentiles' becoming believers is that the non-Jewish community gets rich on God's grace and the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, which include eternal salvation, at the expense of the unbelieving Jewish community. However, God has not finished His work with the Jews, and Paul states that they will experience the same riches and wealth of God's grace and benefit when God fulfills His promises to them in the most complete manner. "Their fullness" is the filling out of God's promises to the Jews when everyone of them will be an authentic believer and living on the land of Israel under the rule of Jesus after he returns to establish the first stage of the Kingdom of God—the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. This is also when God makes the Jews the "great nation" of Genesis 12 and they, with Jesus, rule over the Gentile world. I think that Paul will refer to a similar "fullness of the Gentiles" in v. 25.

²⁹⁴ Ὑμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς ἔθνεσιν· ἐφ' ὅσον μὲν οὖν εἰμι ἐγὼ ἔθνων ἀπόστολος, τὴν διακονίαν μου δοξάζω – Paul knows that, as the sole "apostle to the Gentiles," among whom are those in Rome to whom he is writing, he is actually working to the benefit of the Jews by fulfilling this responsibility. He is making his job just that much more magnificent by moving human history on an existential level towards God's fulfilling His promise to the Jews to make of them a great nation (cf. Genesis 12:1-3).

²⁹⁵ εἰ πως παραζηλώσω μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ σώσω τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν – And Paul makes his job to the Gentiles more magnificent by causing the Gentiles to be an object of annoyance to the Jews. After all, Jesus is Jewish, and so it is for the Jews first and foremost that Jesus is the Messiah (cf. Romans 1:16, etc.). It is not difficult to understand how Gentiles' believing in the Jewish Messiah will make stubborn and hard-hearted Jews annoyed and angry. It is through people, especially Jews, like Paul traveling around the Roman Empire and claiming that a man who was crucified in Jerusalem several years earlier is the Anointed One whom they have been expecting to free them from their enemies and establish the restored Kingdom of Israel. As he said at the beginning of chapter 9, he would give up his own salvation in order to see his fellow Jews believe in the gospel. Similarly, he would hope that they would become annoyed and angry at his proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah and eventually (by the grace of God) become Christians themselves.

²⁹⁶ εἰ γὰρ ἡ ἀποβολὴ αὐτῶν καταλλαγὴ κόσμου, τίς ἡ πρόσλημψις εἰ μὴ ζωὴ ἐκ νεκρῶν – Paul is implying again that God has not completely abandoned the Jews. While the "rejection" of the Messiah by most of the Jews (or God's rejection of them, because ἡ ἀποβολὴ αὐτῶν can mean either) has resulted in God's making Gentiles His friends through their belief in Jesus, then the "acceptance" of Jesus as the Messiah by possibly more Jews than the current remnant (or God's acceptance of them, because ἡ πρόσλημψις can mean either) will turn out to provide them with "life," i.e., eternal life, as opposed to the destiny of death and destruction to which they are currently headed.

Paul uses the phrase ἐκ νεκρῶν, which means literally "out of the dead ones." From those who have died, God will raise Jews to eternal life and to take part in the millennial kingdom of Jesus' ruling over the Jews and the world. Thus, the "acceptance" of "some" Jews of the gospel now in Paul's day will result in their being raised "out of the dead ones" and enjoying life in the Kingdom of God.

²⁹⁷ εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀπαρχὴ ἀγία, καὶ τὸ φύραμα· καὶ εἰ ἡ ῥίζα ἀγία, καὶ οἱ κλάδοι – In keeping with the point which Paul is making about God's faithfulness to the Jews, he uses two analogies. The first is that of dough. If the "first portion," the initial part of the dough which the baker begins to knead is thought by him to be important for making bread, then the rest of the dough is important also. Paul is speaking chronologically and historically. I think he is referring to the promises which God made to Abraham and repeated to Isaac and Jacob. If they were important to God such that he made these promises to them, then the promises are still in effect thousands of years later and still apply to the descendants of these three men. As a result, the promises still hold for the Jewish nation, even though many of them have not properly believed God.

The second analogy is that of a tree. If the "root" of the tree is important to the one tending the tree, then the "branches" are also. Again, if the very beginning of the Jewish nation with the promises to the patriarchs was important to God, then the continuation and fulfillment of these promises in the existence of future "branches" is important to Him also. These "branches" are future

participants in the fulfillment of the promises to the Jews first and to Gentiles second who adopt the same kind of belief as Abraham—as Paul will go on to explain.

²⁹⁸ Εἰ δέ τινες τῶν κλάδων ἐξεκλάσθησαν, σὺ δὲ ἀγριέλαιος ὢν ἐνεκεντρίσθης ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ συγκοινωνὸς τῆς ρίζης τῆς πότιτος τῆς ἐλαίας ἐγένου – Here, starting in v. 17, Paul continues the second analogy by admitting that some of the “branches,” i.e., people of the Jewish nation, became dislodged from the promises of God by virtue of their unbelief, while unnatural branches of sorts, Gentiles, became participants in His promises that, in Genesis 12:1-3 were first addressed to Abraham, the first Jew, and therefore to the Jews after him. These promises are the very “rich root” of the tree and of the people of Israel—and of the sinful human beings who imitate Abraham’s belief. Hence, they are also the very wealth of the Gentiles, which constitutes not only participation in the “great nation” of Israel by their valuing it, but also obtaining God’s eternal mercy and life. Notice that Paul uses the singular *su* (σὺ) to encourage each individual Gentile among the Roman Christians to think about the significance of his becoming qualified for the fulfillment of God’s promises, while a whole host of Jews, who are “the chosen people of God” ethnically speaking, will miss out on the temporal and eternal elements of these promises. We learn from the rest of the Bible that the Gentiles will participate in God’s promise to make of the Jews a “great nation” through several ways. Gentiles who were believers and died will be raised from the dead and transformed into immortal and morally perfect beings when Jesus returns, and they will rule with him over the world during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. The same will be true for Gentiles who are still alive at Jesus’ return. They will be lifted from the earth, transformed, and return to earth to reign with Jesus. And, I think it is safe to assume, Gentiles, who become believers during the millennial kingdom, will acquire eternal life on the new and eternal earth of Revelation 21-22 with all the other believers, both Jews and Gentiles.

²⁹⁹ μὴ κατακαυχῶ τῶν κλάδων εἰ δὲ κατακαυχᾶσαι οὐ σὺ τὴν ρίζαν βαστάξεις ἀλλὰ ἡ ρίζα σέ – Nevertheless, in v. 18, Paul says that Gentiles who now participate in the Abrahamic and Israelite promises of God should not be “arrogant” and think that they have made themselves worthy of God’s blessings (as the Jews unfortunately have thought down through the centuries). This kind of arrogance on the part of believing Gentiles towards unbelieving Jews fails to appreciate the nature of the “rich root” of the promises of God which were conveyed to Abraham and his Jewish descendants in Genesis 12-21 by His grace. As Paul has pointed out and points out here, sinful people do not make themselves worthy of the promises which constitute the “root.” Instead, people, some of whom are not even seeking God’s blessings (Gentiles), end up receiving them because God sovereignly and independently chooses to change them by the inward work of His Holy Spirit. Then, by His continued faithfulness to them, God causes them to persevere in their faith so as to obtain eternal life. In this way, the gracious promises of God “support” them and their inward change and faith. As a result, no human being will be able to say that his salvation has anything to do with him apart from and independent of God and His grace.

³⁰⁰ ἔρεῖς οὖν ἐξεκλάσθησαν κλάδοι ἵνα ἐγὼ ἐγκεντρίσθῶ – In v. 19, Paul anticipates a statement by prideful Gentiles who have supposedly become believers in Jesus and who think that they will acquire the fulfillment of the “rich root” of the promises of God. They say that the unbelieving Jews “were broken off” from their own natural olive tree of “Israel,” meaning that they have lost the opportunity to enjoy God’s promises, while believing Gentiles have taken their place on the tree when they were “grafted in” to it. With the singular “you,” Paul writes this as though it is the individual Roman Christian who is speaking.

³⁰¹ καλῶς τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ἐξεκλάσθησαν, σὺ δὲ τῇ πίστει ἔστηκας. μὴ ὑψηλὰ φρόνει ἀλλὰ φοβοῦ – Paul says in v. 20 that the Gentiles are actually correct—to a degree. The Jews lost their participation in the “Israel” of the promises “because of their unbelief.” And the Gentiles “stand” to receive the promises of God “because of [their] belief.” But Paul is also implying everything that he has said about belief—that it ultimately comes from God and His gracious work in a human being, so that none of us has any basis on which he can brag or boast about his being accepted by God. Therefore, Paul exhorts the Roman, Gentile believers not to be “arrogant” and allow their pride to be a part of their thinking about their relationship with God in contrast to unbelieving Jews, as if the latter are not good people while they deserve God’s forgiveness and eternal life because of their inherent goodness. Instead, Paul wants the authentic believers to continue to “fear” and revere God in a way that reflects their understanding that if it were not for His sovereign grace in the midst of their insoluble sin, they would end up being condemned by Him.

³⁰² εἰ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τῶν κατὰ φύσιν κλάδων οὐκ ἐφείσατο, μὴ πως οὐδὲ σοῦ φείσεται – Indeed, Paul is never presumptuous so as to think that all those who claim to believe in God and Jesus are authentic believers. Therefore, he says here in v. 21 that if his individual Gentile reader continues to be arrogant, he is only pretending to be a Christian which will mean that God will not “spare” him in the same way that He “did not spare the natural branches,” the unbelieving Jews. All unbelieving Gentiles, regardless of their claim to worship God and embrace Jesus as the Messiah, will miss out, too, on the fulfillment of God’s promises the same way that unbelieving Jews will miss out on it. And this is because their arrogance demonstrates that they actually do not have *authentic* belief. They are striving to obtain God’s acceptance and mercy with the same erroneous mentality as the Jews who are trying to earn God’s favor through their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. The key Paul will say in v. 22 is to remain in God’s kindness through persevering in humble faith.

³⁰³ ἴδε οὖν χρηστότητα καὶ ἀποτομίαν θεοῦ ἐπὶ μὲν τοὺς πεσόντας ἀποτομία, ἐπὶ δὲ σὲ χρηστότης θεοῦ, ἐὰν ἐπιμένῃς τῇ χρηστότητι, ἐπεὶ καὶ σὺ ἐκκοπήσῃ – Paul continues in v. 22 to urge his Roman, Gentile, Christian reader to consider carefully who God is. He is both kind and severe. He is kind to those who genuinely repent of their sins and believe in Him and Jesus the Messiah. And He is severe, just, and condemning towards those who are arrogant and reject Him, even if they are claiming to believe in Him. Therefore, “to those who fell,” the Jews who have been unbelievers, God will perform His “severity” and wrath. To those who (supposedly) have become believers, God will grant His “kindness.” But this is only if they “remain in His kindness,” which is to say, if they are truly changed of heart and authentic believers.

“Otherwise,” Paul warns his individual reader, “You will be cut off” like all the unbelieving and arrogant Jews. He will lose his being grafted in to the natural olive tree with the rich root of the promises of God to make the nation of Israel the most powerful group of people in all history and to grant eternal life to those who imitate Abraham’s humble belief.

Thus, with the analogy of the tree and the reality of the importance of authentic belief, Paul has presented the concepts of God’s kindness (grace, mercy, and love for an individual) and His justice (judgment, condemnation, and destruction). The Jews who “fell,” i.e., who rebelled against God and rejected His truth, particularly the truth of Jesus’ being the Messiah, are in the process of receiving God’s “severity,” that is, his justice and condemnation. The Gentiles, who have been grafted into the Jewish tree of God’s Abrahamic promises, are receiving God’s kindness. However, in order for them to obtain the fulfillment of God’s promises, there is the condition of their persevering in authentic belief—which Paul has made clear exists only according to the sovereign will of God. Otherwise, they are in the same boat as the unbelieving Jews and will incur God’s wrath and destruction.

³⁰⁴ *κάκεινοι δέ, ἐὰν μὴ ἐπιμένωσιν τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ, ἐγκεντρίσθησονται· δυνατὸς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς πάλιν ἐγκεντρίσαι αὐτούς* – Likewise, Paul is saying in v. 23 that there is always the possibility that the current unbelieving Jews, “these others,” become truly believing—“if they do not continue in unbelief.” In which case, God will “graft them in anew,” obviously because He is powerful enough” to do so. God can change their hearts through the work of His Holy Spirit and make them a part of the “tree” of His promises, which according to Genesis 12, belongs to Abraham and his physical descendants on an ethnic level.

This is what the “anew” means. Jews have an ethnic claim to God’s promises, so that, in a sense, they begin life as children of the promise. But they will take part in them only if God powerfully changes their inwardness and they become authentic believers. They start life as ethnic Israel and therefore appear as though they are *bona fide* members of God’s chosen people. However, due to their unbelief, they do not fulfill the condition necessary for participating in the greatness of the nation of Israel and in eternal life. As a result, as unqualified branches, God breaks them off, so to speak, from the natural tree of ethnic and eternal Israel (cf. 11:17ff.) with the result that they incur His condemnation. However, if they eventually become authentic believers, then God will make them “anew” a true part of His chosen people.

³⁰⁵ *εἰ γὰρ σὺ ἐκ τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἐξεκόπης ἀγριελαιίου καὶ παρὰ φύσιν ἐνεκεντρίσθης εἰς καλλιέλαιον, πόσῳ μᾶλλον οὗτοι οἱ κατὰ φύσιν ἐγκεντρίσθησονται τῇ ἰδίᾳ ἐλαίᾳ* – Indeed, Paul has already said that, in an ethnic sense, the Jews occupy a primary position to receive God’s promises to Abraham, because they are his physical descendants through the miracle baby Isaac and who will become the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3. They naturally (cf. v. 21) are branches of the “cultivated olive tree,” while Gentiles originate connected to a “wild olive tree.” These latter, according to v. 24, were “cut off” from their own ethnic tree of Gentiles and then “grafted contrary to nature in [the] cultivated olive tree” of the Jews. As members of ethnic Israel, the former therefore have the right to the fulfillment of the promise of the land of Israel and the restored Davidic kingdom (which I think Revelation 20 describes), while the non-Jews who come from other ethnic groups do not per se. It is as though the Jews have the right of first refusal to the Kingdom of God—the privilege of deciding whether to accept or reject God’s promises before they are offered to others.

Nevertheless, according to Revelation 20, the believing Gentiles will help rule the restored Kingdom of Israel and the rest of the world if they were believers before Jesus’ return. Or they will be welcome to live on the land of Israel with the Jews if they become believers after Jesus’ return. And Paul’s main point here is that God will “much more certainly” graft into their own ethnic tree believing Jews, which graft, by definition, would be something that is not “contrary to nature.” Paul cannot emphasize enough that the nation of Israel, the Jews, are the rightful recipients of God’s promises—even if all of them do not end up enjoying their fulfillment because God sovereignly chooses not to grant some of them His grace, a changed heart, and authentic belief and obedience.

³⁰⁶ *Οὐ γὰρ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν. ἀδελφοί, τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο, ἵνα μὴ ᾗτε παρ’ ἑαυτοῖς φρόνιμοι, ὅτι πρόωσις ἀπὸ μέρους τῷ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν ἄχρι οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ* – It very much seems that Paul adds this paragraph of vs. 25-27 (and, we will see, vs. 28-32) so that the Roman Gentile Christians are not arrogant and think that they have taken over from the Jews the primary position as God’s people. Plus, it may be that he wants to make sure that they are not relying on what they have learned so far about the biblical message, which may not be as complete as that which Paul is presenting to them.

As in other places where Paul uses the word “mystery,” it refers to something that is predicted in the Old Testament and will eventually happen in human history when it is the right time for God to bring it about. It remains “hidden” of sorts until the actual event arrives. Then it is out in the open, and everyone who has eyes to see will see it and believe it. Therefore, a “mystery” is also something that requires God to open a sinful person’s mind and heart in order to recognize it and understand it correctly. In this case, Paul has been pointing out that there are verses in the Old Testament that indicate that the Jews have rejected, do reject, and will continue to reject God, their God (because they are His chosen people), while the Gentiles, who more naturally worship the false gods of this world, embrace Him. Here he plainly states the fact of the Jews’ rejection of God—a “partial hardening has occurred to Israel.” In other words, there is only a relatively small group of Jews, a “remnant” according to 11:5, of which Paul is one of them, who are genuinely believing in Jesus as the Messiah, such that this will be the case for a period of time. On the other hand, there is clearly a large portion of Jews who do not believe, which Paul calls a “partial hardening... to Israel.”

And he goes on to say that this will be the spiritual complexion of the Jewish nation “until the fullness of Gentiles has come in.” Paul has been emphasizing God’s sovereign choice of both Jews and Gentiles whom He changes inwardly so that they become authentic believers in Him and in Jesus. Therefore, “the fullness of Gentiles” could refer to the moment when the last Gentile in God’s plans becomes a believer. But I think that he means something different. Paul had written in v. 12 of the “fullness” of the Jews. There, I interpreted him to mean God’s fulfilling His promises to the Jews when everyone of them will be an authentic believer and living on the land of Israel under the rule of Jesus after he returns to establish the first stage of the Kingdom of God—the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. This is also when God makes the Jews the “great nation” of Genesis 12 and they,

with Jesus, rule over the Gentile world.

In line with this interpretation, I think that Paul in v. 25 is describing God's finishing His plan to allow (even cause) the Gentiles to exercise hegemony over the world and over the Jews as stated in Deuteronomy 28:13-14. It seems that most commentators believe Paul to be talking about the last predestined Gentile to become a believer before God fulfills His promise to the nation of Israel when He makes them the "great nation" of Genesis 12. But it makes more sense to me in the light of God's stated plan in Deuteronomy 28 for both the Jews and the Gentiles that he is referring to the option of a shift in greatness from the Gentiles in the rest of the world to the Jews on the land of Israel. It will also be then that Jesus will return, which will trigger God's changing the hearts of all Jews who survive The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord of Malachi 4:5, which coincides with the last days of the rule of the Gentile Beast of Revelation. Nevertheless, and during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 when Jesus and the Jews rule the whole world, there will probably be additional Gentiles throughout the world who will become believers—just as all the Jews who live during this time period will be genuine followers of Jesus as their Messiah and king.

³⁰⁷ καὶ οὕτως πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται, καθὼς γέγραπται ἥξει ἐκ Σιών ὁ ῥυόμενος, ἀποστρέψει ἀσεβείας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβ – If Paul really is talking about a major global political change, which I think he is, then *houtos* (οὕτως) at the beginning of v. 26 means "without further ado" as I have translated it. As soon as God has finished granting rule of the world to the Gentiles, He will transfer this to the Jews "without further ado"—without there being one second of delay in regard to His fulfilling His promise to the nation of Israel. And this promise Paul states as "all Israel will be saved."

There are at two likely options for what Paul means by these words. One is that "all Israel" refers to all the Jews and the Gentiles who, by the end of history, have become the new Israel and chosen people of God because of their genuine belief in Jesus the Messiah. Bible students like to call this total group "the church." The second option is that "all Israel" means every Jew on the earth who lives through God's final judgment and discipline of them, so that they become the first generation of believing Jews during the "millennial kingdom" of Revelation 20 under Jesus' rule as their king.

Paul quotes three prophetic passages in the Old Testament, Isaiah 59:20-21a; Isaiah 27:9; and Jeremiah 31:33-34, that help us figure out which option is correct.

The first is Isaiah 59:20 in this verse,

[Isaiah 59:20](#) "A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob (καὶ ἥξει ἔνεκεν Σιών ὁ ῥυόμενος καὶ ἀποστρέψει ἀσεβείας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβ)," declares Yahweh.

There is one word in Paul's Greek text that is different from the LXX – ἐκ (out of, from) instead of ἔνεκεν (because of, for the sake of). If Paul means "out of," which he probably does, then he is emphasizing that the "one who delivers" and saves Israel comes from Israel themselves. The Deliverer of Israel, and we know his name to be Jesus of Nazareth, will arrive "out of" the Jews, meaning directly from them and in order to save the nation of Israel from their earthly enemies, their sin, and ultimately God's eternal condemnation. This is to say that Isaiah 59:20 is a prediction that God will indeed cause the Jews to become a nation of people who are properly obedient to Him, which now we know must include their authentic belief in Jesus the Messiah. This points us to the second option above. When God has reached the place in His plans and purposes and ends the Gentiles' rule of the world, He will shift this rule to the Jews in the midst of producing a mass revival of heart, mind, and faith among the Jews. This is symbolized in the vision of the millennial kingdom in Revelation 20 after Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel.

³⁰⁸ καὶ αὕτη αὐτοῖς ἡ παρ' ἐμοῦ διαθήκη, ὅταν ἀφέλωμαι τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν –

Then, in v. 27, Paul quotes only the first part of Isaiah 59:21 and refers to the second part of this verse while he also conflates portions of Isaiah 27:9 and Jeremiah 31:33-34 when he writes, "and this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins." Very simply, Paul finishes his statements of v. 26 from Isaiah 59:20 by quoting the first part of Isaiah 59:21. Then, he borrows a small part of Isaiah 27:9 and alludes to two small parts of Jeremiah 31:33-34 to complete the idea. Isaiah 59:20 indicates that God will rescue His people, the Jews, from their sins (and, by extrapolation, from the harmful intents of their earthly enemies), and doing so will be that to which He is committed as a "covenant" with them. The completion of this idea by Paul is to say explicitly that God will be "the One who delivers" them "when [He] take[s] away their sins"—a clear reference to a portion of the second line of Isaiah 27:9. And we know that He forgives them only on the basis of Jesus life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Plus, we notice that the last and larger part of Isaiah 59:21 says just exactly this, "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring," says Yahweh, "from now and into perpetuity." In other words, Paul is paraphrasing this longer statement, that God's mercy towards the Jews will go on "into perpetuity" during the existence of their "offspring" and their "offspring's offspring." God's commitment to and forgiveness of the Jews will never end, and I suggest that this is as long as their restored Kingdom of Israel lasts under the rule of Jesus their Messiah on the land which God promised them in Genesis 12:1-3. The two verses from Jeremiah 31 are saying the same thing—that God makes a "covenant...with the house of Israel" such that He will "forgive their iniquity, and their sin [He] will remember no more." Therefore, God is explicitly declaring that this covenant and this forgiveness will be *for the Jews*.

[Isaiah 59:21](#) As for Me, this is My covenant with them (καὶ αὕτη αὐτοῖς ἡ παρ' ἐμοῦ διαθήκη)," says Yahweh: "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring," says Yahweh, "from now and into perpetuity."

[Isaiah 27:9](#) Therefore through this Jacob's iniquity will be forgiven; and this will be the full price of the pardoning of his sin (καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν ἡ εὐλογία αὐτοῦ, ὅταν ἀφέλωμαι αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν = when I take away his sin): when he makes all the altar stones like pulverized chalk stones; when Asherim and incense altars will not stand.

[Jeremiah 31:33](#) "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days (αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη, ἣν

διαθήσομαι τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκεῖνας),” declares Yahweh, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 31:34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know Yahweh,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares Yahweh, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more (ὅτι ἵλεως ἔσομαι ταῖς ἀδικίαις αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν οὐ μὴ μνησθῶ ἔτι).”

This also points us to the second option above. God has made the New Covenant with the Jews and will forgive their sins through Jesus the Messiah, which will become the basis for His shifting the rule of the world from the Gentiles to the Jews when he brings in the latter’s “fullness.” Paul is implying that whatever unbelief the Jews suffer as a group after Jesus’ first coming, it will eventually be counteracted by the mass revival when “all Israel will be saved” as stated in Romans 11:26. And, I think makes sense that such a renewal of the Jews will occur at Jesus’ second coming when God establishes the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 on the land of Israel and throughout the world.

³⁰⁹ κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἐχθροὶ δι’ ὑμᾶς, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογὴν ἀγαπητοὶ διὰ τοὺς πατέρας – Here, in v. 28, Paul is continuing to explain that eventually all the Jews alive at the end of the present age will become authentic believers in God and in Jesus the Messiah. He says to his Gentile readers that the Jews have actually been God’s “enemies with respect to the good news” because of their unbelief and rebellion against Him. But this has been and is for the benefit of these Christians in Rome, so that the gospel has not only gone out to the Gentiles, but also, through God’s sovereign choice and grace, has had a positive effect on them and caused some of them to become authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah. Thus, the Gentiles have embraced “the good news” in the midst of the Jews’ rejecting it.

Nevertheless, the unbelieving Jews, indeed all the Jews, “are beloved with respect to the choice on account of the fathers.” In Genesis 12 and following, God chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to be the recipients of His promises to make them and their physical descendants the most powerful nation in human history and to grant them the blessing of eternal life if they demonstrated authentic belief—which we know the three “fathers” did. Therefore, the Jews have always existed under these promises with the potential to be loved by God and made true Jews, who experience all that God has promised His people, just as the Roman, Gentile, believing Christians can look forward to participating in these same promises when Jesus returns and inaugurates the Kingdom of God as described by the Old Testament prophets and Revelation 20-22.

³¹⁰ ἀμεταμέλῃτα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλήσις τοῦ θεοῦ – In. 29, Paul ends the sentence with a very important statement with respect to God’s dealings with the Jews in human history in the present realm. His “gracious gifts” to them of His promises that He gave to Abraham, and the “calling” of them as His chosen people ethnically, so that they will eventually see the fulfillment of His promises, “are unchangeable.” God never changes His promises to them throughout history. And this is in spite of their rejecting Jesus by executing and killing him through crucifixion. But God in no way abandons the Jews altogether, even though, during their existence, He has judged them and disciplined them harshly for their unbelief and disobedience. For example, they went through the destructions of the northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians (722 B.C.), of the southern Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians (586 B.C.), and of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans (A.D. 70).

Nevertheless, God’s promise to the “fathers,” Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to make of their physical descendants a “great nation” (cf. Genesis 12:1-3), one that is filled with authentic believers like Abraham and one that rules the world as the Gentiles have, will be fulfilled sometime in the future. The prophets of the Old Testament and the book of Revelation indicate that this will coincide with the coming of the Messiah, i.e., the second appearance of Jesus when he returns and inaugurates the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Plus, the fulfillment of God’s promises to the Jews will happen, Paul is saying, because a promise by God is a promise. He never reneges, so that the Jews always remain the ethnic chosen people of God in human history, in spite of many of them rejecting their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, over such a long period of time (two thousand years so far).

³¹¹ ὥσπερ γὰρ ὑμεῖς ποτε ἠπειθήσατε τῷ θεῷ, νῦν δὲ ἠλεήθητε τῇ τούτων ἀπειθείᾳ – Paul continues explaining to His Roman, Gentile readers that their situation is analogous to that of the unbelieving Jews. These Romans, as pagan idolators, were “formerly...disobedient” to God, so that they were subject to His wrath and eternal judgment, condemnation, and destruction. However, with so many of the Jews’ “disobedience” and refusing to embrace their Messiah Jesus, God has sent the message about him to the Gentiles, and they “now have been granted mercy” through becoming authentic believers in Jesus. They have found God’s eternal forgiveness by becoming like what all the Jews eventually will be—genuine followers of their Messiah through God’s changing their hearts.

³¹² οὕτως καὶ οὗτοι νῦν ἠπειθήσαν τῷ ὑμετέρῳ ἐλέει, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ νῦν ἐλεηθῶσιν – Then, in v. 31, Paul finishes the analogy of the tree with its root of the promises of God and the branches of authentic believers, both Jews and Gentiles, by saying the situation is essentially reversed. The Jews are “now disobedient” and basically the “pagan idolators” of sorts while the Gentiles are “being granted mercy” and have become the accepted people of God. However, this is only so that “these,” the Jews, “may be granted mercy” in the future when they as an ethnic group as a whole become authentic believers and obtain God’s forgiveness and mercy as the Gentiles have done so.

³¹³ συνέκλεισεν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς πάντας εἰς ἀπειθειαν, ἵνα τοὺς πάντας ἐλεήσῃ – In v. 32, Paul ends his history lesson of God’s relationships to Jews and Gentiles. He says that “all” the different groups of people, the Jews and the Gentiles, have experienced unbelief and disobedience of God, because “God has enclosed” them in the inherent sin of their human natures. But this has been “in order that He may show mercy to all” the different groups. God causes all the peoples and nations to some degree to experience authentic belief which results in God’s mercy. Thus, even though the Jews are God’s chosen people ethnically speaking in the present realm, He has always intended that both some of the Jews and some of the Gentiles participate in His eternal forgiveness through Jesus the Messiah as their advocate and not by means of the Mosaic Covenant, which is strictly a Jewish covenant.

Another option is that “all” refers to the majority of the Jews. God has hardened their hearts so that eventually He may show mercy to not just the majority of the Jews in the Millennial Kingdom, but truly ALL the Jews. In the context of speaking of both the Jews and the Gentiles, I am inclined to think that Paul is referring to the first option above.

³¹⁴ Ω βάθος πλούτου καὶ σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως θεοῦ ὡς ἀνεξεραύνητα τὰ κρίματα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεξιχνίαστοι αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ – After using the last three chapters to give his readers a history lesson on God’s purposes for humanity, Paul now steps back and wonders at His magnificence and that it involves a rather complicated story about the Jewish nation and its individuals and about the Gentile nations and their individuals. He has explained that God is demonstrating His character and featuring His justice and mercy whereby different Jews will experience one or the other and different Gentiles will also experience one or the other, thus culminating in the *present* age with a final display of God’s faithfulness to the Jews when he causes them to become the most powerful nation in history.

Certainly, God’s wisdom and knowledge of the created reality as He works out His purposes regarding His justice and mercy are so deep that it is impossible to understand all there is about what He is doing and causing to happen in the world. God decrees and determines that the history of the people of Israel and the peoples of all other races, colors, and creeds will be what it is. And all we can do is marvel at what He is doing with them, while declaring that we do not really understand but at least have the biblical information to guide us in comprehending as much as we can. We may often ask, “Why in the world is such and such happening,” or “Why would God even allow such things to happen?” And while we do not know the complete answers to these questions, God always does and encourages us to trust Him. We must trust Him that He knows exactly what He is doing in bringing about the circumstances of human history to the conclusion that He has planned in the present, temporary realm and that will continue into the future, eternal realm.

³¹⁵ τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου; ἢ τίς σύμβουλος αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο – Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13 in verse 34. God’s mind is so vast that only He knows all that knows—meaning that we are granted a glimpse into a part of His unfathomable knowledge through observing the creation and human history while also learning the truth about Him as presented in the Bible. Plus, God’s wisdom is so great that only He can advise Himself on what He ought to do with respect to the creation and how He ought to direct the story of human history.

Isaiah 40:13 Who has directed the Spirit of Yahweh (τίς ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου), or as His counselor has informed Him (καὶ τίς αὐτοῦ σύμβουλος ἐγένετο, ὃς συμβιβᾷ αὐτόν;)?

³¹⁶ ἢ τίς προέδωκεν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἀνταποδοθήσεται αὐτῷ – In v. 35, Paul communicates the ideas of Job 35:7 and 41:11. No one can say that he has provided something to God such that He is obligated to repay him. God in His providence and as the transcendent author and owner of the entire creation is always the giver to all human beings so that they owe Him—and not the other way around. For example, God grants His grace and mercy to sinful human beings who deserve only His justice and condemnation.

Job 35:7 “If you are righteous, what do you give to Him (ἐπεὶ δὲ οὖν δίκαιος εἶ, τί δώσεις αὐτῷ), or what does He receive from your hand (ἢ τί ἐκ χειρὸς σου λήμψεται;)?”

Job 41:11 “Who has given to Me that I should repay him (ἢ τίς ἀντιστήσεται μοι καὶ ὑπομενεῖ)? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine (εἰ πάντα ἢ ὑπ’ οὐρανὸν ἐμὴ ἐστίν).”

³¹⁷ ὅτι ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα: αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν – In 1 Corinthians 8:6, Paul says, “Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus the Messiah, in the light of whom are all things, and we exist in the light of him.”

Here, in Romans 11:36, Paul summarizes quickly and precisely the exact relationship between God as the Creator and all the other elements which exist and which can be said to be created. In other words, they are not God. This relationship is such that every element of the creation is ultimately a product of God’s making it. In addition, every element exists with God’s being the one who is most interested in it. Regardless of how fascinated by some aspect of the creation we might be, no one is more intrigued by it than God, because He is the one who made it. Otherwise, He would not have made it. And He has created every element, for example, every electron, proton, and neutron in the 200 billion galaxies of the universe, as something which participates in His purposes of bringing about the eternal Kingdom of God with Jesus as its king. We may use something for our own human purposes, but God uses everything for His divine purposes which far exceed ours in their meaning, value, and worth. To these basic ideas of the connection between God and the creation, Paul responds with a kind of doxology that God should and will get all the praise and applause for what HE is doing that, according to the Bible, will go on forever into eternity and all the “ages” that could possibly exist with God as their creator. Finally, Paul ends this section with a simple “Amen” from the Hebrew language, meaning “May this all be affirmed by me and everyone else who understands with the limited knowledge we have as human beings.”

³¹⁸ Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ παραστήσαι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν θυσίαν ζῶσαν ἁγίαν εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ, τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν – Because the Mosaic Covenant’s sacrifices lack eternal value and Jesus has already given his body as an offering to God in order to qualify for his role as our eternal king and high-priest, the only legitimate offering left for his followers, whether Gentiles or Jews, to present to God is themselves—especially as a thank-offering like those in the Mosaic Covenant. By presenting themselves to God, we Christians offer our all—our minds, hearts, bodies, and wills. Also, instead of a dead animal, our thank offering is a living being. We thank God for all that He has done for us by giving Him all that we are—body, existence, and spirit.

In addition, the offering of ourselves needs to be set apart and different from the world, not in a passive way of simply being a recipient of God’s grace and what He has done for us, but truly active from the inside out, from the change inwardly that God has caused that reveals itself in our everyday moral and practical choices. This section is all about Paul’s stating the theology of

Christian living that is filled with our willful choices as free moral agents who demonstrate our faith as sinners who never perfectly succeed at morality this side of eternity, but who continuously repent of our sin while pursuing morality, and wait expectantly and confidently for God to transform us into morally perfect beings when Jesus returns. But it is also important to realize that Paul is writing these exhortations of Christian living to those who are in Rome, just as he tailors the same kind of exhortations to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and others.

The question that Paul is answering is, “What is the holy way to live life as a Christian in Rome, the capital city of the Roman Empire?” So the real work of Christianity is deep in our beings where we tend to be resistant to obeying God. Instead, we work as hard as we have to in order to choose to submit to Him, His sovereignty, and His call to us to be different and act differently from this world. We are to choose a life that pleases God instead of displeasing Him, i.e., with the goodness which we know in our minds and is spelled out in the Bible. As a result, Paul wants these Roman Christians to live lives that are truly pleasing to God.

Thus, after explaining in the previous 11 chapters how God in various ways is being merciful to both Jews and Gentiles, Paul exhorts his readers to do the right and reasonable thing, which is to say to God, “Here I am. I choose to follow and obey You alone with my whole being regardless of what the world encourages me to do.”

Louw & Nida **λογικός, ή, όν**: pertaining to being genuine, in the sense of being true to the real and essential nature of something — ‘rational, genuine, true.’

This Paul indicates is the genuine (and therefore logical, reasonable in contrast to something that simply does not make sense) way to carry out a ritual towards God in worship of Him in lieu of any rituals which God prescribed in the Mosaic Covenant (what a priest does in the temple = λατρεία). It does not involve bringing bulls and goats or other material things as offerings to the temple in Jerusalem. It involves only presenting ourselves to God wherever we are and whatever we are doing, because it is our hearts of belief and a desire to be obedient to God that really count. And God mercifully has caused and continues to cause this to be our choice whereby we desire righteousness through the inner work of His Spirit. Thus, we are “living...sacrificial thank-offering[s]” to God.

³¹⁹ καὶ μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοῦς εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐάρεστον καὶ τέλειον – Here in vs. 2-8, Paul presents a parenthesis on the theology of Christian thinking in comparison to the thinking of the world and on the theology of a Christian group nature. The first is attention to God’s will that results in personal humility, and the second is lovingly interdependence like that of the members of the human body.

After God has changed our hearts, we begin living differently from the world by filling our minds with truth from the Bible and the good news of Jesus as the Messiah. This is what allows us to choose to act differently, because we know what God is doing and what He commands when it comes to genuine morality.

There are two ways to live life in this world. One is to adopt the philosophies, mindsets, values, purposes, and intentions of a world which is fundamentally hostile to God and His message in the Bible. The other is to learn as much as possible about what God has said in regard to Himself and us from the Bible and commit ourselves to pursuing life in conformity with who God is and what He commands and requires. Obviously, Paul is urging his Gentile, Christian readers to do the latter and not the former, so that they may please God in the choices of their lives and arrive at the divinely intended and guaranteed goal of those who do so—eternal mercy and life.

While Paul is writing these exhortations to specifically Roman Christians, this parenthesis pertains to all Christians—both Jews and Gentiles.

³²⁰ Λέγω γὰρ διὰ τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης μοι παντὶ τῷ ὄντι ἐν ὑμῖν μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν παρ’ ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν, ἐκάστω ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἐμέρισεν μέτρον πίστεως – Therefore, this is how Paul wants people to be renewed in their minds. Our tendency is to think what great things we can do for ourselves to enhance our standing within the world and what great things we should do for God to change the world for Christ (just as unbelieving Judaism tends to think what great things they are doing for God by obeying the Mosaic Covenant). And the Roman Christians may even think that Paul is greater in God’s eyes than they are because he is an apostle of the Messiah.

But Paul is encouraging his readers not to think this way about him or with prideful arrogance, but in much, much more humble terms. To live a life pleasing to God requires a level of humility that is willing to have God grant just as much grace as He desires to a person with the result of an understanding of reality that falls short of greatness as this world thinks of greatness, but is still much more than if a person ignores the biblical message. This is the “measure” or amount of guarantee of obtaining eternal life that God wants a particular person to experience in this life as every Christian heads towards the goal of the eternal Kingdom of God.

Consequently, Paul is using the word *pistis* (πίστις) not to mean faith, as in Christian faith, but to the guarantee and commitment which God Himself has made and then given to each Christian by assigning each one a specific and important role within the collection of Christians. Thus, God has granted to each Christian a portion of His “token,” i.e., His trust and guarantee and commitment in that He has entrusted and committed to each Christian a role that is part of His fulfilling His faithfulness and promises to authentic believers. This role is each individual Christian’s story, predetermined by God as a means to aid all Christians in their enduring the trials of life with their faith so as to enter into the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns. These roles and personal stories are not what we give to God, but what He gives to us and that we humbly receive as we serve Him and our fellow believers in the role and manner that He desires. Paul describes this also in Ephesians 3.

Therefore, the roles that we end up performing, especially within the community of believers of our own personal lives, become that tangible representation of the future promise which God will give us of eternal life in the Kingdom of God. As in the song of

the Old Rugged Cross, we will exchange our stories, given to us by God's grace, for the guaranteed outcome and goal of eternal life.

³²¹ καθάπερ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι πολλὰ μέλη ἔχομεν, τὰ δὲ μέλη πάντα οὐ τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει πράξιν – Here Paul likens the collection of Christians to the parts of a human body. His point is going to be that just as each part of the body does something different from other parts (eyes do not hear, and legs do not see), so also each Christian does something slightly different from other Christians. This is because each Christian's role (*praxis*, πράξις = function) and story is slightly different from those of all other Christians. And like a human body where the individual parts of the body are not only attached to one another but also help each other live in unison of purpose and goal with one another, Christians do the same with and for one another.

In this way, Paul implies that God does not need our great actions for Him to change the world for Christ. What God "needs" (because He does not need us at all) is our living out *what He has given us*, the unique functions and roles within the community of believers in which we reside on a daily basis. We do not really give anything to God, even ourselves. We receive what He has given us, our spiritual gifts or roles within the Christian community, and we humbly live them out. It is our humble and devoted lives that are our gifts to Him, because He has first given them to us.

Also, this being the first explicit communication from an apostle to these new Roman, Gentile Christians, it makes sense that Paul would want to educate them on the nature of their relationship to one another and to other Christians in the Roman Empire, including to him as an apostle who proclaims the gospel message better than other Christians do. This is why he is using the 1st person plural pronoun "we" in vs. 4-9. Plus, he knows that Jews are returning to Rome after being absent from the city for approximately six years, so that Jewish and Gentile Christians will have to love one another as a community of believers in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus. They certainly have not been used to doing this, and it will be a little strange to combine the two ethnic groups in such a religious context.

³²² οὕτως οἱ πολλοὶ ἐν σώματι ἔσμεν ἐν Χριστῷ, τὸ δὲ καθ' εἷς ἀλλήλων μέλη – Thus every Christian has a specific *praxis*, function or role within the collection of Christians, where their primary association is with the Messiah.

There are "many" Christians in any community of Christians in the Roman cities (and the same today), but each Christian is an individual whose been assigned a function within that community and within the whole collection of Christians worldwide by God.

³²³ ἔχοντες δὲ χαρίσματα κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν διάφορα, εἴτε προφητείαν κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως – Paul is saying that each Christian is graced or gifted his role within the broader and certainly narrower collection of single, individual Christians. Again, this is not something that he gives to God, but that God gives to him.

For example, one God-given role is prophecy, i.e., conveying truth in accordance with God's guaranteeing that He will fulfill His promises of granting eternal life and the Kingdom of God to believers in the Messiah through His communication of this information to human beings. At this point in history, this communication is by means of and has its source in the OT and the apostles, although there were "prophets" among the apostles who also communicated their message with great accuracy. Probably, Paul includes himself as an apostle in this group whom he calls "prophets." Thus, rather than list apostles separately, for the Romans' sake, who have not yet encountered an actual apostle but only a "prophet" or "prophets" who spoke to them about Jesus as the Messiah, he focuses on people who not only grasp the apostolic message more clearly than others, but also can talk about it more clearly and coherently than others. But they are still just "members" of the "body" of the Messiah and should not think of themselves more highly than other Christians—because their gift and giftedness to speak the truth is a gift of God and His grace. Even if they were bright and articulate before they became Christians, these two skills and abilities were as a result of God's having created them such. They did not make themselves bright and articulate. God did. Therefore, their gift from God started with His planning to create them and then reached its fruition when He caused them to become Christians.

³²⁴ εἴτε διακονίαν ἐν τῇ διακονίᾳ, εἴτε ὁ διδάσκων ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ – Here Paul is simply saying that performing our functions, our *praxis*, is enough. We do not have to change the world. We just have to do what God has given us within the collection of Christians and within the world. And each one of us can feel good about having a high standing before God, even if the world does not consider our function or status to be of any significance.

Thus, Paul indicates that "serving" for the benefit of helping people in their Christian existences in this realm is another important function within the collection of Christians. Likewise, teachers take what the apostles have conveyed from their authoritative position and repeat it to other Christians within their own personal communities of believers. The intellectual reminders are helpful for people as to their continuation to believe the truth of Jesus as the Messiah. Nevertheless, as history has moved along and we are farther from the culture and time of the apostles, the teacher is really more of a humble, discussion leader, so that he admits that he needs help in understanding exactly what the apostolic message says and means. In other words, there are no authoritative teachers per se, because there are no teachers who have been taught by a living apostle.

Notice also that Paul separates the function of teacher from the prophet. Perhaps he is thinking of itinerant teachers who traveled to Rome and first taught these Roman Christians the gospel, whom he calls "prophets," in comparison to stationary or settled teachers in a city who continue to teach the Christians in that city.

³²⁵ εἴτε ὁ παρακαλῶν ἐν τῇ παρακλήσει: ὁ μεταδιδούς ἐν ἀπλότητι, ὁ προϊστάμενος ἐν σπουδῇ, ὁ ἐλεῶν ἐν ἰλαρότητι – Paul says that some people are granted by God the role, function, and *praxis* of encouraging others to persevere in their faith. They have grasped the gospel, but they really enjoy taking it and encouraging others to grasp it likewise and persevere in believing it in order to enter into the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns.

Others have the function of having the means and desire to be giving in a manner that clearly marks them as suited to this role and function. They are incredibly generous out of their authentic inwardness which is primarily what God is looking for. Similar is the story of the poor woman who gave her small amount at the temple. The greatness of her gift was not in the quantity but in

the quality of her subjectivity.

Another important function within the Christian group is having people who provide care and concern for those who are going through difficult circumstances. But again, it is with genuine inwardness that is characterized by eagerness—not grumbling or grinding our teeth in resentment for giving up what we think is rightfully only ours, such as our time. But is this different from all Christians should be doing? Not really, but they will be people who lead in this regard, while others follow them in their example.

And while being merciful in circumstances where the last thing we want to do is forgive others who have hurt us, we cheerfully grant mercy and forgiveness out of a genuine desire to do so because of the mercy which God has granted us. Paul says the same thing in [Ephesian 4:32](#) Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. But how is this any different from what all Christians should do? Perhaps Paul is talking about those who publicly lead and encourage others to be forgiving towards those who have hurt them, because they have clearly demonstrated this activity in their own lives.

³²⁶ Ἡ ἀγάπη ἀνυπόκριτος – Paul now draws the conclusion that Christian love is not scripted or planned or done with the mentality of earning anything from God—like the mentality of Jews who follow the Mosaic Covenant as such or like Christians who do their Christianity within their church as such. It flows individually out of the grace of God in the midst of the function which He has assigned to each Christian as Paul goes on to explain in the next paragraph. It is our changed inwardness that prevents our actions on behalf of God from being our acting out a script by which we think we can impress God with our righteousness and obtain His applause. Yes, He will applaud us, but only and ultimately because of what He has done within us and for us. We are truly existential beings. We exist out of God's causing us to do so, but our choices within our existence are definitely real for the purpose of God's judging them. As a result, He applauds our good choices as Christians who faithfully live out our roles. But in the final analysis, our choices, even our choices to be loving, are brought into existence by God. Therefore, Paul says that our love in the midst of our God-given functions should never be thought of as just a script we are following as in a play or movie, or as something we are giving to God to earn His blessing. Instead, it is something that God is likewise causing according to His grace.

³²⁷ ἀποστύγοντες τὸ πονηρὸν, κολλώμενοι τῷ ἀγαθῷ – Here Paul presents us with what should be the moral quality of our roles, functions, and stories as Christians. It should be that of holiness and being set apart from the world. And he describes what this really looks like on a practical level as he segues to a list of commandments for all the Romans Christians as to how they are to manifest their belief in Jesus the Messiah. But this list is not exhaustive as we can see from other letters of Paul and the other apostles. We should recognize that our problem is not really knowing what to do. All we have to do is examine our own conscience, and it provides plenty of information for how to pursue morality and goodness. Therefore, our problem is making the commitment to goodness and willfully choosing to do righteousness, which is what Paul is mainly encouraging here. The basis of this list is the fact that Jews are returning to Rome and the issues that this will present to these Gentile believers. So the main point is for the Gentile believers to love their Jewish brothers, and vice versa—in the midst of their God-given functions, where they need to recognize that none of them, Jew or Gentile, is any greater than anyone else. They are all co-heirs of the grace of the God and looking forward to the eternal Kingdom of God.

First, they all should hate evil and cling to what is good so that they never let go of it. This is a general statement that encompasses all that is evil and all that is good. For example, good includes believing that which is true, wanting that which is good, etc. And this exhortation is obviously in the light of our propensity to reject the goodness of God's moral commandments and to embrace the irrational opposite which is clearly evil. Then, we end up condoning evil for the sake of rebelling against God. Paul's encouragement to these Roman Christians is to grab onto God's goodness and live their lives according to only it.

³²⁸ τῇ φιλαδελφίᾳ εἰς ἀλλήλους φιλόστοργοι, τῇ τιμῇ ἀλλήλους προηγούμενοι – Paul says that they should express themselves with biblical love towards each other that is characterized by tenderness, understanding, compassion, and humility. There should be a sympathy with all believers because of the common bond of understanding reality the same way and having the mutual hope of the gospel. It is recognizing that each Christian has the same heart that we do. Similar to 1, 2, & 3 John, it is definitely not hating and rejecting brothers and sisters in Christ, but embracing them despite cultural, doctrinal, ethnic, etc. differences—for example, the ethnic difference of Jews and Gentiles within the Christian community in Rome that is about to occur.

Thus, they should also lead each other and continually point one another towards God, respecting both God and themselves for where each person is in the level of the maturity of his belief. We should be respecting others and granting them care, attention, proper civil behavior, and even praise that is due them as fellow human beings and, especially, fellow Christians.

And allowing others to be praised instead of us is a key characteristic of authentic belief. A good example is John the Baptist who deferred to Jesus when his disciples noticed that he was getting more attention and drawing larger crowds than John. Another example is Barnabas who recognized the value and role of Paul. Barnabas spoke well of him to the apostles in Jerusalem and obtained his help for ministering to the new Gentile Christians in Antioch. Paul encourages the Philippians to have the same mindset as Jesus who was willing to look like a common man and not demand to be worshiped as the God-man that he was. He washed his disciples' feet and did not demand they do so towards him before his crucifixion the next day that would rescue them from God's wrath and destruction. Envy of attention that others are getting so easily causes factions within Christian communities. We are even tempted to use slander, expressing something that is negative about others that subtly or not so subtly drives people away from them.

³²⁹ τῇ σπουδῇ μὴ ὀκνηροί, τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες, τῷ κυρίῳ δουλεύοντες – Paul also wants his Roman readers to love each other diligently and conscientiously as they understand that their good treatment of one another is an act of service to God. They are to be zealous to serve God that begins with their inner beings, their spirits, having a strong and persistent desire to do so. Thus the

energy required to live our lives in the light of the truth requires a conscious and decisive commitment to believe it. It is also easier when people demonstrate genuine interest in the truth and are not complacent. Yawning in our faces does not engender real excitement to proclaim the gospel. But we need to find our excitement from God and from within us and not on the basis of people's positive response to the gospel and to us. We need to be excited for ourselves and what God is doing inside us, regardless of how people respond to us—whether they enthusiastically embrace the gospel message, appear lukewarm in their response, or violently reject it.

³³⁰ τῇ ἐλπίδι χαίροντες, τῇ θλίψει ὑπομένοντες, τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτεροῦντες – Three key elements of being set apart and different from the world as Christians.

1) While life's circumstances are going to be arduous and hard, involving even suffering which can come in all sorts of different forms and from all sorts of different directions (persecution by human beings, financial hardship, disease and illness, emotional instability, natural disasters, etc.), Paul would have the Roman Christians express joy in the guaranteed outcome of their lives, their "hope," i.e., eternal life and moral perfection in the Kingdom of God, being confident that what God has promised, He will certainly bring about.

2) Thus, Paul wants them to persevere in their belief even while life seems to be squeezing it out of them by the pressures and problems of this temporary, earthly existence that perhaps leads them to question the goodness of God.

3) And in the midst of their hope and difficult circumstances, Paul wants them to express their thoughts and emotions to God in prayer. They should be ready to follow God wherever He leads them. The plan of their lives is ultimately God's and not theirs. We need to wait expectantly for God's kingdom to come when God has planned. And we need to wait expectantly for what He brings us in the next moment and future moments of our lives. Prayer is the place where we express what we really desire as Jesus did in Gethsemane and Paul encourages in Philippians 4:4-9. It reveals to God and to ourselves what is really going on in our hearts. It is where we really do business with God. And the ultimate business is the same as that of Jesus, to say, "Father, not my will but Yours be done."

³³¹ ταῖς χρείαις τῶν ἀγίων κοινωνοῦντες, τὴν φιλοξενίαν διώκοντες – Two more moral qualities for Christians –

4) Wherever they see other Christians in need, Paul wants them to participate in those needs by helping to meet them.

5) This includes the lodging and feeding of out of towners—even Jewish believers who are returning to Rome and who might need a place to stay until they can find a permanent residence, and this even if the Jewish believers differ from the Gentile Roman Christians in their understanding of the gospel—regarding exactly how to use the Mosaic Covenant in their lives (cf. Romans 14 & 15).

³³² εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντας ὑμᾶς, εὐλογεῖτε καὶ μὴ καταρᾶσθε – Another moral quality of a Christian –

6) Part of being set apart from the world is to love our enemies. If people are persecuting us for our strange belief in the Jewish Messiah and the Jewish God, the one true God (which is exactly what the whole Bible predicts), then Christians should fundamentally want the best for their persecutors, which is that God would open their eyes and grant them genuine repentance, belief, and eternal mercy and life as He has and will for us. This would be instead of responding naturally to our persecutors by wanting them cursed and condemned eternally by God.

³³³ χαίρειν μετὰ χαιρόντων, κλαίειν μετὰ κλαιόντων – Another important quality –

7) Empathy and compassion are such valuable gifts that we give to people depending on their emotional state. If they are ebullient and happy and laughing their heads off, they appreciate it when another person is happy and laughs with them. If they are sad and disappointed and they are grieving by weeping uncontrollably, they appreciate it when another person is willing either to just sit with them or even weep with them, because the person feels for them in their sadness and grief. Consequently, Paul wants his readers to be genuinely compassionate and sympathetic, i.e., feeling with those who are experiencing either positive feelings because of enjoyable circumstances or negative feelings because of painful circumstances—even, I guess, if the ones weeping are their enemies. In so doing, they demonstrate their willingness to "love" other human beings as God has loved us by being so gracious to us to reconcile us to Himself in spite of our being His enemies. But not every Christian has the capacity to be so willing to feel with others, so that this exhortation by Paul is for us all to work at doing so as much as possible, i.e., as much as God through His grace causes us.

³³⁴ τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἀλλήλους φρονοῦντες, μὴ τὰ ὑψηλὰ φρονοῦντες ἀλλὰ τοῖς ταπεινοῖς συναπαγόμενοι. μὴ γίνεσθε φρόνιμοι παρ' ἑαυτοῖς – Another important moral quality –

8) Treating all other human beings equally in our speech and actions, meaning that we recognize that they are no less an existing individual made by God as we are. Thus, Paul wants the Christian Romans to realize that they all stand equally saved and acceptable before God by virtue of their belief in His Messiah. Therefore, they should treat each other with equal deference and respect. They should not allow their greater knowledge and firmer belief to convince them that they have greater status in comparison to others with less knowledge and belief. Instead, they should focus on the humbling aspect of Christianity as to the fact that they are all morally wretched sinners who have equally needed God's grace to change their subjectivity and rescue them from His wrath and condemnation. In this way, while they may be wise, they are not such in their own eyes because of something which they have done apart from God's grace.

They should not strictly associate with people who might provide them with economic or social advantage. They should associate with the rich and the poor, the proud and the humble. And they should let the examples of the humble teach them how they should behave, while the examples of the proud and arrogant should teach them how they should not behave.

³³⁵ μὴδὲν κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόντες, προνοοῦμενοι καλὰ ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀνθρώπων – Another important quality –

9) Paul wants them to reserve vengeance as something which God will handle—at the final judgment. It is His responsibility, while they should be as merciful and kind as possible to those who hurt them. As they live their lives in the presence of all men,

they should keep focused on what God defines as good and right, and this will be their guiding light in regard to their own actions.

Plus, all people really want to be treated with kindness and compassion. And since this is the case, Paul adds that the Roman Christians should care about goodness as all people actually know that is good—even if they ignore and reject God and His goodness and promote the opposite of it.

³³⁶ εἰ δυνατόν τὸ ἐξ ὑμῶν, μετὰ πάντων ἀνθρώπων εἰρηνεύοντες – It is not always possible, but Paul wants the Romans to maintain good relationships with all people. In other words, he wants them to avoid provoking them to anger and evil as much as possible. They should avoid any unnecessary actions that would do so.

But being at peace with them may mean not choosing to associate with them in order to avoid their bullying and mistreatment.

And it may be impossible to avoid all unnecessary words or actions that people will react to with anger.

³³⁷ μὴ ἐαυτοὺς ἐκδικοῦντες, ἀγαπητοί, ἀλλὰ δότε τόπον τῇ ὀργῇ, γέγραπται γάρ ἐμοὶ ἐκδίκησις, ἐγὼ ἀνταποδώσω, λέγει κύριος – Again, God is the ultimate avenger of all wrongs perpetrated by human beings towards others. He will right every wrong through either His justice or His mercy, both of which we will find satisfying in the final analysis. To bolster his point, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:35.

Deuteronomy 32:35 ‘Vengeance is Mine, and retribution; in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them.’

Very comforting. No suffering or pain immorally caused by other people will go unpunished.

³³⁸ ἀλλὰ ἐὰν πεινᾷ ὁ ἐχθρὸς σου, ψώμιζε αὐτόν· ἐὰν διψᾷ, πότιζε αὐτόν· τοῦτο γὰρ ποιῶν ἄνθρωπος πρὸς σωρεύσεις ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ – Paul then quotes Proverbs 25:22,22 to the effect that being kind to one’s enemies, i.e., those who hate you (especially because of your belief in Jesus), is only a precursor of the wrath and destruction of God if they continue in their rebellion against the truth.

³³⁹ μὴ νικῶ ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ ἀλλὰ νίκα ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ κακόν – It will be a battle, but Paul maintains that goodness will win in the end and that Christians should pursue doing what is good and right in the midst of evil in order to align themselves with God as He moves history towards the culmination of His justice in destroying both evil and those who remain committed to evil.

Thus, Christians look forward to the final time when God will pay evil back for what it deserves—God’s wrath, condemnation, punishment, and eventual destruction, so that He conquers evil forever.

This is similar to Romans 2, that their enemies will be storing up wrath for themselves in the day of the wrath and judgment of God. Evil needs to be destroyed, and we need to embrace this fact and that God will bring it about in due time. So our sentiment for vengeance is good, but our individually acting on it is wrong. We need to let God be the final judge when He sees fit. Our response to an unbeliever who is hurting us is to treat them with grace, mercy, kindness, and patience as much as possible until God judges and condemns them—unless He changes their hearts and He forgives them!

³⁴⁰ Πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἐξουσίας ὑπερεχούσας ὑποτασσέσθω. οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἐξουσία εἰ μὴ ὑπὸ θεοῦ, αἱ δὲ οὖσαι ὑπὸ θεοῦ τεταγμέναι εἰσὶν – It is important to take into account both the textual and the historical contexts of Paul’s instructions about the Roman government. The textual context is that he is answering the question, “What is the holy way to live life as a Christian?” Therefore, he is not providing a political theory in this passage even though there is some of this in it. The historical context is that Jews wrestled with the question, “How should we respond to pagan and secular governments who rule over us in the light of God’s requiring that we submit to Him only by our being under the Mosaic Covenant?” The Herodians answered the question by supporting Herod unequivocally, probably because it brought them power, influence, and wealth. The Zealots answered the question by claiming it was idolatrous to submit to Rome and even pay taxes. The subgroup of Zealots known as the Sicarii took this to the extreme and exercised terrorism whenever they could and assassinated Roman soldiers and officials whenever possible. The Pharisees as a subgroup of Zealots rationalized submitting to Rome and paying taxes, just as they rationalized a lot of things that were obviously or not so obviously in violation of the Mosaic Covenant. The Pharisees along with the Herodians asked Jesus if it was morally right for them to pay taxes to Caesar (Rome) or not. His response was to “render [pay back, give] to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” In other words, it is good to support even pagan and secular governments who rule over you up to the limit where they would require your very soul, worship, allegiance, and obedience as the only god. Then a true believer must follow God’s directives and not the government’s. Paul in Romans 13 is saying the same thing.

The question that Paul is therefore answering is not, “Should I never disobey the government?” Even though this is what it sounds as though he is doing with the answer being No. The question he is answering is, “Should I ever obey the government, because it is neither God Himself nor Jesus, His proxy?” And the answer is, Yes, with Paul’s implying what Jesus said, up to the point where the government asks you to give it the worship, etc. that only God deserves. The Roman government was no group of saints. Often government officials and their proxies, the Roman military, could be harsh, cruel, and capricious in their treatment of the populace regardless of their ethnic, political, or religious affiliation. So Paul is certainly not implying that the Roman government was always right and in line with good, moral, and biblical principles. His language may seem to indicate differently, but all he is saying is, all things being equal, it is holy and right for followers of the ultimate King, God and His proxy, Jesus of Nazareth, to obey and submit to sinful human governments as put in place by the transcendent source of all created reality and the author of this story which He is telling. But Paul and the rest of the Bible do not provide three easy steps to figuring out when it is appropriate to say No to the government. They provide only the principles to make a person wise to think this through for himself in his own specific situation and set of circumstances.

It is also important to realize that Paul was writing in the context of the Roman government and not our own constitutional, democratic republic. We all are supposed to be the government and not a ruling elite, an oligarchy. So when is it right to say No

to ourselves, is the question we have to ask?

As the Roman Christians have submitted themselves to a new king, Jesus of Nazareth, Paul feels it necessary to instruct them in how they should live under the rule of the Roman Caesar and his deputies. In a few words, they should obey them as that which constitutes holiness as Christians, while they wait for Jesus to establish his rule over the land of Israel and the earth. Indeed, all governing authorities are in their place by the sovereign and determinative will of God as merely stepping stones towards the final Messianic government of Jesus. They exist because God wants them to exist, and if He wants to remove the existing officials from their positions and put others in their place, then He will. He thus grants governing officials the power and right to rule for a time, i.e., for His sovereignly chosen amount of time, so that people who are pursuing holiness as believers in Jesus should obey them. Therefore, Christians do not have to fight for every official to remain in power, as if this is what Paul means. But in our country, we have the right to work to remove them and put others in their place. But this, too, will be only according to God's sovereign will.

Also, Paul obviously would want his readers to understand that this command of his pertains to only when that which is biblically moral is upheld by the existing government. If a government defines goodness as that which is actually evil and evil as that which is actually good, then of course no biblical Christian can obey such a government in those cases. For example, the Sanhedrin ordered Peter and John to stop preaching the gospel when God had ordered them to do so. Peter told them that he had to defy their order and obey God instead—come what may.

Acts 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed (ἀκούειν) to you rather than to God, you be the judge; **20** for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

³⁴¹ ὥστε ὁ ἀντιτασσόμενος τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ διαταγῇ ἀνθέστηκεν, οἱ δὲ ἀνθεστηκότες ἐαυτοῖς κρίμα λήμψονται – Because governments exist at the will of God, Paul says that to oppose any goodness which a government prescribes is to oppose God. This a Christian should not do, because the government will condemn such a person. And Paul is implying that it is right for the government to do so as he goes on to explain.

³⁴² οἱ γὰρ ἄρχοντες οὐκ εἰσὶν φόβος τῷ ἀγαθῷ ἔργῳ ἀλλὰ τῷ κακῷ. θέλεις δὲ μὴ φοβεῖσθαι τὴν ἐξουσίαν· τὸ ἀγαθὸν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἔξεις ἔπαινον ἐξ αὐτῆς – Here Paul explicitly states what was implied in v. 1, that the laws of any government should encourage biblical goodness and punish biblical evil, in which case this very human government that is not the government of Jesus should be obeyed by Christians and, as a result, approves of Christians' doing so. Just because God and Jesus are not directly ruling over Christians does not mean that they should have no fear of immediate, human authority. Again, because the government is an instrument of the sovereign God who wants it there, to fear it is to fear God—up to the point when the government chooses to think of itself as the only god and defines good as evil and evil as good. This would obviously pertain mainly to when a government outlaws Christianity. Then we can and must say, “No.”

³⁴³ θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν σοὶ εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν. ἐὰν δὲ τὸ κακὸν ποιῇς, φοβοῦ· οὐ γὰρ εἰκὴ τὴν μάχαιραν φορεῖ· θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν ἔκδικος εἰς ὀργὴν τῷ τὸ κακὸν πράσσοντι – Because good governments ultimately owe their existence to God and His sovereign plans, they serve God for the purpose of promoting good and punishing evil on earth. As a result, if a Christian were to disobey his government (because it is not the government *per se* of Jesus), then the Christian can expect nothing but the justice, judgment, and punishment of and by the government. Indeed, just as God's wrath will be displayed at the final judgment towards those who are committed to evil, so also the government with its source in God displays God's wrath on earth in the temporary realm. By doing so, it is God's avenging servant (διάκονός... ἔκδικος), administering justice.

Is Paul sanctioning capital punishment by mentioning a “sword,” or is this strictly metaphorical for punishment? Probably the former, because the Mosaic Covenant sanctioned capital punishment. And indeed, it is even carried out in OT Israel on occasion.

³⁴⁴ διὸ ἀνάγκη ὑποτάσσεσθαι, οὐ μόνον διὰ τὴν ὀργὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τὴν συνειδήσιν – Paul says that biblical ethics involve an element of oughtness. There should be the fear of the wrath of God and the human government which He has established in a person's country, and there should be the sense of moral obligation which a Christian feels within himself, both of which should lead him to do the right thing and avoid the punishment of his government—even though his government is not currently headed by Jesus who will rule the entire world after his second coming.

³⁴⁵ διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ φόρους τελεῖτε· λειτουργοὶ γὰρ θεοῦ εἰσὶν εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο προσκαρτεροῦντες – As a result, Paul says that the financial support of, the granting respect for, and the honoring of people who exercise authority by working within the government (“they”) is a moral obligation of a Christian by paying taxes.

³⁴⁶ ἀπόδοτε πᾶσιν τὰς ὀφειλάς, τῷ τὸν φόρον τὸν φόρον, τῷ τὸ τέλος τὸ τέλος, τῷ τὸν φόβον τὸν φόβον, τῷ τὴν τιμὴν τὴν τιμὴν – By seeing the people who work in the government as God's servants, the Christian is able to grant money, respect, deference, obedience, and honor to them. In this way, he is serving God also.

Paul does not offer any guidance on what to do when taxes are exorbitant and government officials abuse their power and authority. He is simply saying that, in general, it is good and right for Christians to submit to and support human governments because of their role in keeping the peace and providing citizens with a social and political context in which to live their lives and hopefully come to authentic faith and belief in God.

³⁴⁷ Μηδενὶ μηδὲν ὀφείλετε εἰ μὴ τὸ ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν· ὁ γὰρ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἕτερον νόμον πεπλήρωκεν – If money and honor are owed to government officials because they serve God (even if they do not acknowledge that they do), then Paul indicates that it stands to reason that love is owed by Christians to their fellow Christians, and indeed to all other human beings as fellow sinners who need the grace and mercy of God through the Messiah.

While Jews hold the perspective that fulfilling the Mosaic Covenant requires performing all 613 commandments, including the ritual and ceremonial requirements, Paul is saying that love in regard to one's fellow Christians and fellow human beings suffices to fulfill the covenant. In other words, being a person who is holy and properly pursuing obedience to God does not require being

Jewish. It requires only being loving towards one's fellow human beings.

Cf. [Isaiah 58:5](#) "Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed and for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to Yahweh? 6 "Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke? 7 "Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"

Thus, a proper understanding of the rituals such as fasting in the Mosaic Covenant is to see them as ultimately fulfilled in loving others from a place of biblical inwardness and faith, not in actually performing the rituals.

Another striking feature of what Paul is saying here is that the Mosaic Covenant includes the commandment to love God with all one's heart, soul, and mind. But Paul is saying that loving God is fulfilled by obeying the commandment to love one's neighbor, because I cannot really do the latter without doing the former. Loving my neighbor implies that I am already loving God.

Cf. [Matthew 22:39](#) "The second [commandment] is like (ὁμοία = similar in importance) it [the first and greatest commandment], 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Cf. [John 4:23](#) "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers." This makes rituals and ceremonies along with the temple much, much less significant than authentic inwardness and love for one's fellow Christians and human beings. Therefore, not all the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant are equally valuable. Some are universal and eternal, while the rest are provisional and temporary. And it is a person's inwardness that is most important, because without the Holy Spirit's having changed a person's heart, his acts of love and kindness are not genuinely biblical and acceptable by God.

³⁴⁸ τὸ γὰρ οὐ μοιχεύσεις, οὐ φονεύσεις, οὐ κλέψεις, οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις, καὶ εἴ τις ἑτέρα ἐντολή, ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ ἀνακεφαλαιούται ἐν τῷ ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν – Paul sums up this obligation of love to all other human beings on the Christian's part by quoting [Exodus 20:13-17](#) and [Leviticus 19:18](#), the four commandments regarding human relationships and the one commandment for Jews to love their fellow Jews. These are a summary of loving other people in need as one would want to love himself in the same need—by meeting the need.

It is important to recognize that "any other commandment" includes [Deuteronomy 6:4](#) "Hear, O Israel! Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one! 5 "You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Thus, Christians' loving their fellow Christians and other sinful human beings is a fulfillment of the Mosaic Covenant, whether or not they are Jews, because the commandment to love is a universal and eternal one. So we Gentiles do fulfill the Mosaic Covenant, even more so than Jews who are focused on the outward rituals and ceremonies and miss the point about the circumcision of the heart.

Cf. [Romans 2:13](#) for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, 15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,..."

So Gentiles are justified before God by fulfilling the Mosaic Covenant through their inward, changed hearts and pursuing obedience to the universal, moral commandments of the covenant of which everyone is naturally aware (cf. [Romans 1:28](#) And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.)!!

Cf. [Luke 10:25-37](#) and the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

³⁴⁹ ἡ ἀγάπη τῷ πλησίον κακὸν οὐκ ἐργάζεται πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη – Paul concludes this brief but powerful exhortation to love especially one's fellow believers and all others by reminding his readers that evil is the very opposite of goodness. Evil is something their fellow human beings should never experience from them as Christians. Plus, he repeats that love is the overarching umbrella of the Mosaic Covenant, and therefore of the entire OT Torah, which obviously starts with God's love for sinful human beings overall by providing them with food, shelter, etc. and for those whom He has predestined to receive His eternal mercy. Then the OT instruction segues to human beings' love for God and finally arrives at human beings' love for other human beings as that which is the fulfillment of all the instructions and commandments of the Old Testament, even the commandment to love God.

³⁵⁰ Καὶ τοῦτο εἰδότες τὸν καιρὸν, ὅτι ὥρα ἤδη ὑμᾶς ἐξ ὕπνου ἐγερθῆναι, νῦν γὰρ ἐγγύτερον ἡμῶν ἡ σωτηρία ἢ ὅτε ἐπιστεύσαμεν – Two options – 1) Paul is emphasizing the nearness of Jesus' return to encourage the Roman Christians to avoid their sin that comes from a false view of reality, or 2) Paul is encouraging his readers to view their salvation as something which begins at this very moment, because they believed that their salvation would certainly take place when Jesus returns, which also means that their salvation can be described as their current sanctification which manifests itself in their pursuing goodness and morality in their lives before Jesus' return.

#2 is more plausible, because otherwise Paul probably would have used the word "first" before "we believed" to mean #1. Plus, he did not mention the sins of 13:13 in the initial list of moral pursuits in 12:10-16 and now is doing so to emphasize them as what to avoid if one is claiming to want salvation. Christians may be tempted to think that by virtue of their belief in Jesus and his return, they are set and can live whatever kind of life they want, even one that includes sin. But Paul is saying, No. A life that condones drunkenness, sexual sin, and gratifying every sensual feeling for the sake of pleasure is not one that is taking eternal

salvation seriously.

Thus, Paul wants his readers to pursue “this,” i.e., all that he has mentioned so far about a holy life that is different from people in the world. To be asleep is to be in a state of unbelief and unaware of the important truths that God provides for how to live a “holy” life. Paul is stating that now is the time to move from a life of unbelief to a life of belief by taking morality seriously.

³⁵¹ ἡ νύξ προέκοπεν. ἡ δὲ ἡμέρα ἤγγικεν. ἀποθώμεθα οὖν τὰ ἔργα τοῦ σκότους, ἐνδυσώμεθα δὲ τὰ ὄπλα τοῦ φωτός – Here Paul uses the analogy of night to refer to the period of time when the world is dominated by sin and rebellion against God while the day of righteousness is actually now, even though Jesus’ return has not occurred yet. As a result, Paul urges his readers to forego evil that comes from having a false view of reality, i.e., the “works of darkness,” and instead take up their armor and weapons of truth (à la Ephesians 6) and biblical goodness to fight against evil in their lives and the lives of others as he has described in this letter. This is why it is so important to know our Bibles!

He also uses OT language of taking off and putting on clothing as representative of that which people are internally committed.

³⁵² ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ εὐσχημόνως περιπατήσωμεν, μὴ κόμοις καὶ μέθαις, μὴ κοίταις καὶ ἀσελγείαις, μὴ ἔριδι καὶ ζήλῳ – Here Paul is explicit that Christians are called to live as though their whole environment is characterized by truth—even if the rest of the world is not acknowledging the truth. They should live as though they are fully saved and in the millennial kingdom, even though they are not yet. The upshot of rejecting evil and embracing biblical truth and goodness is to act in a manner commensurate with Christianity and moral purity, that eschews alcoholic binges, sexual immorality, gratifying every sensual feeling that cries out to be fulfilled, and being contentious and violent towards other human beings, much of which comes from being envious of what others have in comparison to what we have. Rather, Christians are to be content with what God has provided them. Therefore, being envious and competing with everyone else by bringing them down to get honor and glory from other human beings is a sensual pleasure of the flesh and not in line with God’s moral commandments.

³⁵³ ἀλλὰ ἐνδύσασθε τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τῆς σαρκὸς πρόνοιαν μὴ ποιεῖσθε εἰς ἐπιθυμίαις – Paul exhorts his readers to clothe themselves with the truth of the gospel of Jesus and therefore to act as Jesus would have them act as his subjects—with moral purity and goodness. This is to put him on as clothing, armor, and weaponry. Meanwhile, the deepest level of a moral nature within human beings, their “flesh,” which is fundamentally hostile to God and His truth and remains such throughout even a Christian’s whole life, will constantly push the Christian towards immorality and evil, which should be resisted with every fiber of his being by the grace of God and through knowing the truth of God.

A life of sanctified pursuit of goodness and morality is not optional for Christians. It is mandatory, because it is part of what it means to be saved even now before Jesus returns.

³⁵⁴ Τὸν δὲ ἀσθενοῦντα τῇ πίστει προσλαμβάνεσθε, μὴ εἰς διακρίσεις διαλογισμῶν – Speaking of love for one’s fellow Christians being the fullness of the Mosaic Covenant and of the highest priority after first loving God, Paul instructs the Roman Christians at some length on an immediate and practical issue in their lives. After reading this letter, it is entirely possible that the Gentile Roman Christians now will understand the gospel better than so many other Christians, including Jewish Christians who are still struggling with how to relate to God in the light of their national obligation to the Mosaic Covenant, especially to the religious practices delineated in the Covenant such as eating kosher. Therefore, these Roman Gentile Christians could easily in the newness of their faith look down on and consider themselves superior to Jewish Christians who do not grasp the significance of the gospel as well as they do. And Paul wants to nip this problem in the bud.

Therefore, he encourages the Gentile Christians to embrace their Jewish brothers in Christ even though they know the latter’s perspective on the relationship between the gospel and the Mosaic Covenant is wrong. And their acceptance of them should not be for the purpose of immediately correcting their theology by getting into a discussion and argument with them. Love and acceptance under the banner of following Jesus as Messiah and High Priest are more important than being unified on these particular theological issues, e.g., whether everyone is called to eat kosher.

³⁵⁵ ὃς μὲν πιστεύει φαγεῖν πάντα, ὁ δὲ ἀσθενῶν λάχανα ἐσθίει – The person with the faulty belief system is the Jewish Christian in Rome who is looking at the possibility of eating the meat of animals in the city market and realizes that the source of all the meat there is animals which have been offered to the pagan Roman gods. In addition, the meat has not been prepared in a kosher manner, leaving only vegetables for the Jews personally to prepare in a manner that is in accord with the Mosaic Covenant. This also means that the person who believes he can eat all things is the Gentile Christian who has read this letter, especially Romans 1-8, and has come to understand that it is belief in the Messiah which saves people, not obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, including its offerings, sacrifices, and requirements about, for example, how to eat food. As a result, all Christians, Gentiles and Jews, have no eternal, salvific obligation to the Mosaic Covenant and only to Jesus as their king and priest, thus leaving them free to pursue morality completely apart from following the Mosaic Covenant.

³⁵⁶ ὁ ἐσθίων τὸν μὴ ἐσθίοντα μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτω, ὁ δὲ μὴ ἐσθίων τὸν ἐσθίοντα μὴ κρινέτω, ὁ θεὸς γὰρ αὐτὸν προσελάβετο – Again, Paul urges the Gentile Christians with their better and freer understanding of the gospel not to look down on Jewish Christians who have not yet made the complete transition from the Mosaic Covenant (as obeyed within the Jewish culture, not as actually taught by the Bible) to Jesus as their only ground for eternal salvation and mercy. Indeed, Paul states explicitly that the Jewish Christian with his poor and limited understanding of the gospel is equally acceptable to God as the Gentile Christian with his better understanding, thus demonstrating that a person is not saved or justified by the quality or quantity of his known theology, but by his changed subjectivity and inwardness that results in a genuine willingness and desire to obey God.

³⁵⁷ σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνον ἀλλότριον οἰκέτην; τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ στήκει ἡ πίπτει· σταθῇσεται δέ, δυνατεῖ γὰρ ὁ κύριος στήσαι αὐτόν – Even though Paul uses only the second verb from the previous sentence, condemn, he is referring to both the Gentile who despises the Jew and the Jew who condemns the Gentile. And this question by Paul further bolsters his point that it does not make any sense to look down upon and even think that another Christian is unacceptable or even less acceptable to God because he

lacks the level of understanding that he has. It is because God is ultimately in control of a Christian's journey and destiny, thus making it theologically guaranteed that God will cause the Christian with poor understanding to remain acceptable to Him, even at the final judgment. And this is because of God's own transcendent strength and power which is so much greater than any human being's. It also demonstrates that Christians will have different levels of understanding on biblical issues so that they should treat each other with great patience and acceptance in the midst of their theological differences.

³⁵⁸ Ὅς μὲν γὰρ κρίνει ἡμέραν παρ' ἡμέραν, ὃς δὲ κρίνει πᾶσαν ἡμέραν ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ νοὶ πληροφορεῖσθω – Paul now segues this same discussion into the issue of the Sabbath as described by the Mosaic Covenant. The Jewish Christian with poor understanding of the gospel still considers the Sabbath to be a completely different day from the other six days of the week—even with respect to his eternal destiny and acceptance before God. The Gentile Christian with better understanding realizes that no day is any different from any other day when it comes to his relationship with God for the sake of his eternal salvation. Paul indicates that both Christians should be allowed to be where they are in their understanding—without their looking down on one another with contempt for being “wrong” (this being the context of this passage).

³⁵⁹ ὁ φρονῶν τὴν ἡμέραν κυρίῳ φρονεῖ καὶ ὁ ἐσθίων κυρίῳ ἐσθίει, εὐχαριστεῖ γὰρ τῷ θεῷ· καὶ ὁ μὴ ἐσθίων κυρίῳ οὐκ ἐσθίει καὶ εὐχαριστεῖ τῷ θεῷ – Paul explicitly says that the Jewish Christian who keeps the Sabbath and the Gentile Christian who eats meat that has been sacrificed to idols are both doing so “for the Lord,” while even giving “thanks to God.” This means that they are doing what they think is right, so that it is actually right for each of them individually. Therefore, the Jewish Christian who does not eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols restrains himself in this way “for the Lord” while giving just as much “thanks to God” as the Gentile who will eat this meat. Therefore, both the Jewish Christian and the Gentile Christian honor and obey God as each sees fit. And each of them is doing the right thing as far as God is concerned, even though they disagree with one another on exactly what God requires and one of them happens to be wrong—because this is not a moral issue *per se*.

³⁶⁰ οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐαυτῷ ζῆ καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐαυτῷ ἀποθνήσκει – Paul further describes the mentality of each of these Christians as that which is true of all Christians, that they include certain things in their lives (“live for himself”) or exclude these same things (“die for himself”) not because they are thinking mostly of themselves. Instead, each person lives life to its fullest according to his current definition of “fullness,” which may be a mature definition that includes eating all things or may be an immature definition that includes only kosher food. But they are doing this for someone else, and the implied person is God.

³⁶¹ ἐάν τε γὰρ ζῶμεν, τῷ κυρίῳ ζῶμεν, ἐάν τε ἀποθνήσκωμεν, τῷ κυρίῳ ἀποθνήσκομεν. ἐάν τε οὖν ζῶμεν ἐάν τε ἀποθνήσκωμεν, τοῦ κυρίου ἐσμέν – Paul says that Christians include and exclude elements of the creation in their lives because they desire to be obedient to God. They are thinking mostly of God, not of themselves. They desire to obey Him and not just their own selfish desires. Plus, they realize that they are the very property of God and therefore want to be respectful of Him as their owner. They may end up living life to its fullness correctly, or they may end up dying so to speak to things that are permissible according to God but not according to their current understanding of the gospel. But what really matters is that they both think that they are living life to its fullness according to God's requirements. And this is what is pleasing to God—not their theological correctness.

³⁶² εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἔζησεν, ἵνα καὶ νεκρῶν καὶ ζώντων κυριεύσῃ – Now Paul states that Jesus died for two kinds of people. First he died for those with a poor understanding of the gospel who limit themselves in their lives according to the Mosaic Covenant, when they do not have to if they were to understand the gospel correctly. And Jesus died for those with a good understanding of the gospel who engage in things in life that go beyond the limits of the Mosaic Covenant but are certainly not immoral *per se*, e.g., eating non-kosher food and not keeping the Sabbath.

By dying for both those with an immature understanding of the gospel and those with a mature understanding, Jesus becomes their teacher, leader, and master, i.e., the one who owns them as his slaves in life and eternal life.

³⁶³ Σὺ δὲ τί κρίνεις τὸν ἀδελφόν σου; ἢ καὶ σὺ τί ἐξουθενεῖς τὸν ἀδελφόν σου; πάντες γὰρ παραστησόμεθα τῷ βήματι τοῦ θεοῦ – Reflecting on the same idea as in 14:4, Paul asks, does it really make sense for either a Jew with a poor understanding of the gospel to condemn his Gentile brother for going beyond the limits of the Mosaic Covenant, and for a Gentile with a good understanding of the gospel to look down on his “stupid” Jewish brother for obeying the Mosaic Covenant and remaining within its ritualistic boundaries? And the reason why neither of these makes sense is because both kinds of Christians will be acceptable to God at the judgment and receive His eternal mercy. They will all “stand” at the judgment in the sense that they will not be eternally condemned by God.

³⁶⁴ γέγραπται γὰρ· ζῶ ἐγώ, λέγει κύριος, ὅτι ἐμοὶ κάμψει πᾶν γόνυ καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσεται τῷ θεῷ – Paul quotes Isaiah 45:23 to the effect that all those who submit in their subjectivity and hearts to God will be welcome by Him. And the implied point is that misunderstanding certain elements of biblical truth that have to do with the Mosaic Covenant does not condemn a person eternally. [And for that matter, misunderstanding certain biblical truths in the NT does not condemn a person eternally either.]

As quoted below, Isaiah 45:22-25 calls all human beings to come to God and be saved from His wrath and condemnation. And eventually those from all the nations who properly approach God for mercy will acknowledge not only God's sovereignty but also His justice and mercy. Those of genuine belief will truly bow before God and be saved. In addition, God will fulfill His promise to Israel and justify and save them by changing their hearts and granting them the glory of the eternal Kingdom of God. Therefore, with his quote from Isaiah 45:23, Paul confirms that all true believers will find salvation in Christ, regardless of the quality of their theology regarding the Mosaic Covenant and the gospel—as long as they are humble about it and not harsh, arrogant, and overly critical like the Jewish “believers” in Galatians.

[Isaiah 45:22](#) “Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. [23](#) “I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue

will swear allegiance. ²⁴ “They will say of Me, ‘Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.’ Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him will be put to shame. ²⁵ “In the LORD all the offspring of Israel will be justified and will glory.”

³⁶⁵ ἄρα οὖν ἕκαστος ἡμῶν περὶ ἑαυτοῦ λόγον δώσει τῷ θεῷ – Another way to state the unacceptability of condemning and criticizing believers in the Jewish Messiah on the basis of the quality of their understanding of the gospel is for Paul to comment that each of us is on his own at the judgment. This implies that it is our subjectivity which has been changed by God that will be the key object of judgment by Him when the time comes. The quality and quantity of our theology of the Mosaic Covenant and religious practices is not the key criterion. For example, Abraham had minimal theology compared to the apostles. Also, the quality of the theology of every Christian since the apostles is relatively poor compared to them. Indeed, no one has had as good a grasp on the biblical message as Jesus and the apostles. This is another reason why it is so important for all Christians to be very patient and kind towards one another, so that we conduct our discussions of our differences with the utmost humility and love—even granting each other the reality of a changed heart and therefore leaving it up to God at the judgment to make the final decision about the genuineness of each other’s faith and Christianity.

³⁶⁶ Μηκέτι οὖν ἀλλήλους κρίνωμεν ἀλλὰ τοῦτο κρίνατε μᾶλλον. τὸ μὴ τιθέναι πρόσκομμα τῷ ἀδελφῷ ἢ σκάνδαλον – Nevertheless, Paul also says that it is important for the people with good understanding to be careful about extending the limits of their lives beyond that of those with poor understanding of the Mosaic Covenant. They could end up unsettling their fellow Christians in their faith unnecessarily. This implies that biblical love motivates us not to show just how free we are with respect to Mosaic Covenant rituals and ceremonial practices [and NT rituals and traditional Christian practices], but to encourage Jewish [and other] Christians in their faith as patiently as possible.

³⁶⁷ οἶδα καὶ πέπεισμαι ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ ὅτι οὐδὲν κοινὸν δι’ ἑαυτοῦ, εἰ μὴ τῷ λογιζομένῳ τι κοινὸν εἶναι, ἐκείνῳ κοινόν – Paul, with his excellent grasp of the ideas of the gospel by means of studying the Old Testament so as to understand the concepts of the Messiah as well as possible and how Jesus is the one who fulfills all predictions of the Messiah, is fully convinced that all food is permissible for a Christian to eat (cf. 1 Corinthians 8). Nevertheless, he realizes that his Jewish brother in the Messiah may not have fully understood this yet so that he considers eating non-kosher food to be an act of disobedience to God and therefore immoral.

³⁶⁸ εἰ γὰρ διὰ βρώμα ὁ ἀδελφός σου λυπείται, οὐκέτι κατὰ ἀγάπην περιπατεῖς· μὴ τῷ βρώματί σου ἐκείνῳ ἀπόλλυε ὑπὲρ οὗ Χριστοῦ ἀπέθανεν – The issue here for Paul is not causing another Christian to do something against his conscience, e.g., to eat meat sacrificed to pagan gods. It is to eat meat sacrificed to pagan gods in front of him when he considers it to be immoral towards God, thus making him watch you engage in “immorality” in the midst of your claiming to be a moral person. This will obviously emotionally unsettle one’s fellow Christian, which would not happen if he did not have to watch someone “sin.” In other words, our goal as Christians of loving God and His people is to display goodness before the latter in order to confirm their (and our) commitment to goodness—even if our definitions of goodness are different in relation to the Mosaic Covenant (and religious practices)—until we can help each other come to a common understanding that is correct.

And it is vital to recognize that the person whom we are loving is someone for whom Jesus died as the Messiah. If he was willing to sacrifice himself to this extent for our Jewish brother who lacks good understanding of the gospel, then the least we can do is to behave in such a way that we do not unsettle him emotionally in his faith.

Paul’s command, “Do not destroy...” sounds extreme, as though he is speaking of crushing a fellow believer’s faith. But in the context he is referring to the destruction of the person’s emotional equanimity in the midst of his genuine faith in God. Unnecessarily unsettling a fellow believer in regard to amoral issues becomes a moral issue if we do so out of arrogance and a lack of love.

³⁶⁹ μὴ βλασφημεῖσθω οὖν ὑμῶν τὸ ἀγαθόν – Paul is saying that the good for a person with a more complete grasp of the implications of the gospel can be the evil for a person with a poor understanding. What he does not want is for the Christian community to be divided between people who are actually doing good and yet being spoken of as evil by people who consider their good to be evil. This does not help the overall health of the Christian community. Nor does the division help the overall proclamation of the gospel to the world, because it makes it appear as though unity around Jesus and God’s grace is not as important as disunity on the basis of differences in religious practices. Of course, the latter is exactly what has happened in Christian history with all the factions and denominations that have been created. How unfortunate.

³⁷⁰ οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ βρώσις καὶ πόσις ἀλλὰ δικαιοσύνη καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ χαρὰ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ – And the reason why the kind of food that one is eating should not be high on the agenda of a person with a good understanding of the gospel and Mosaic Covenant is because he should be more concerned about actual goodness and morality in a peaceful and undivided relationship with his fellow Christians while they all rejoice in what God has done through His Spirit in pointing each person towards the fulfillment of His promises and ultimately eternal mercy and life.

³⁷¹ ὁ γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ δουλεύων τῷ Χριστῷ εὐάρεστος τῷ θεῷ καὶ δόκιμος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις – The way Paul describes life in the Christian community in the previous verse is what he says actually pleases God. This should be thought good and right by all other Christians. Every Christian approves of goodness, but sometimes goodness is different from what is actually good if we understand correctly the gospel in relationship to the Mosaic Covenant. As a result, each person who exercises humility and patience towards other Christians of different religious scruples is truly serving the Messiah who died and will be an advocate before God for both kinds of Christians.

³⁷² Ἄρα οὖν τὰ τῆς εἰρήνης διώκωμεν καὶ τὰ τῆς οἰκοδομῆς τῆς εἰς ἀλλήλους – Paul says that the main goal is not each one of us living his life exactly according to his understanding of the gospel, but eternal life instead, where I suppose it is implied that no one will lack understanding of these issues—or at least we will work at acquiring a common and correct understanding while treating each other morally perfectly and lovingly. But keeping eternal life and moral perfection in our sights also results in

encouraging each other towards this goal as the main goal. And at the same time, a secondary goal is that we work at gaining more understanding of the gospel in order to live life beyond the limits of the Mosaic Covenant (and other religious practices that people invent or incorrectly derive from the New Testament—such as the Lord’s Supper, which was Jesus’ command to only his apostles regarding how to celebrate the Jewish Passover, and baptism, which was a ritual contemporary to only Jesus and the apostles).

³⁷³ μὴ ἔνεκεν βρώματος κατάλυε τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ. πάντα μὲν καθαρὰ, ἀλλὰ κακὸν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τῷ διὰ προσκόμματος ἐσθίοντι – Again, the issue for Paul is not causing someone to sin against his conscience. It is displaying before him what is sin in his mind while claiming to be, like him, someone who is committed to goodness. This destroys the cohesiveness of the Christian community and each Christian’s ability to be encouraging towards the ultimate goal of eternal life to his fellow Christians. And it unnecessarily unsettles people emotionally. In other words, the “work of God” is His using Christians in each other’s lives to continue to motivate them towards the fulfillment of His promises and eternal life.

³⁷⁴ καλὸν τὸ μὴ φαγεῖν κρέα μηδὲ πιεῖν οἶνον μηδὲ ἐν ᾧ ὁ ἀδελφός σου προσκόπτει – Paul is saying that it is good to stay within the limits of the Christian with the poorest understanding of the gospel as the means to creating a community of the highest emotional stability with respect to each other’s being a sinner and to remaining unified in looking forward to eternal life.

³⁷⁵ σὺ πιστὶν ἦν ἔχεις κατὰ σεαυτὸν ἔχε ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ. μακάριος ὁ μὴ κρίνων ἑαυτὸν ἐν ᾧ δοκιμάζει – Paul is perfectly willing to let people have their correct and incorrect understandings of the implications of the gospel as long as they have authentic belief and are willing to treat Christians with different levels of understanding with humility and grace. If a Christian has a clear conscience with respect to non-moral issues such as kosher food, whether he thinks one ought to eat kosher (the Jew with poor understanding) or he thinks he is free to eat outside the boundaries of the Mosaic Covenant (the Gentile with correct understanding) then so much the better for this person in the context of the entire community of believers. His loving, patient, and gracious treatment of his fellow Christians is what counts the most.

³⁷⁶ ὁ δὲ διακρινόμενος ἐὰν φάγῃ κατακέκριται, ὅτι οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως· πᾶν δὲ ὁ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἁμαρτία ἐστίν – On the other hand, Paul says that uncertainty about the appropriateness of engaging in certain religious actions of the Mosaic Covenant will make a Christian who does not engage in them feel as though he is being disobedient to God. So if he does not engage in the religious actions, he will feel “condemned” by God, i.e., as though he is committed to immorality—which, in the final analysis, could result in God’s condemnation if a person’s heart is not right before God.

³⁷⁷ Ὁφείλομεν δὲ ἡμεῖς οἱ δυνατοὶ τὰ ἀσθενήματα τῶν ἀδυνάτων βασιτάζειν καὶ μὴ ἑαυτοῖς ἀρέσκειν – Paul as an apostle is certainly one whose understanding of the gospel is as complete and accurate as is humanly possible. He is one of the “strong ones.” However, he is willing to forego living beyond the religious, Mosaic Covenant limits of another believer, if this believer has less understanding than he does and therefore is inaccurate in his grasp of the gospel. This latter person is one of the “weak ones,” and he is demonstrating his “weaknesses” by thinking that eating kosher is a required moral action for a believer in Jesus. Therefore, not to rein in one’s own actions would be to please oneself at the expense of the moral sensibility with respect to religious issues of other believers, who have less of a grasp of the implications of the gospel. Indeed, it is a moral obligation on each Christian’s part to act lovingly towards his fellow believers by not extending his actions beyond what they understand to be the limitations of the Mosaic Covenant.

³⁷⁸ ἕκαστος ἡμῶν τῷ πλησίον ἀρεσκέτω εἰς τὸ ἀγαθὸν πρὸς οἰκοδομήν – Paul says that the idea is to be pleasing to one’s fellow Christians for their “good,” which he goes on to explain in the next prepositional phrase as building them up in their belief in Jesus the Messiah and obedience to God. Implied is the ultimate goal of this edification process which is the promised and guaranteed future of eternal life which God will eventually give all authentic believers.

³⁷⁹ καὶ γὰρ ὁ Χριστὸς οὐχ ἑαυτῷ ἠρεσεν, ἀλλὰ καθὼς γέγραπται· οἱ ὀνειδισμοὶ τῶν ὀνειδιζόντων σε ἐπέπεσαν ἐπ’ ἐμέ – Paul quotes Psalm 69:9 to provide an OT reference to David, the first Messiah, who was willing to experience other people’s hostility towards Yahweh. In this way, David, who would rather have not been so mistreated, did not please himself by avoiding it, but pleased God by being willing to do so. As the first Messiah, he set the example for Jesus who experienced the same opportunity not to please himself when he chose to endure crucifixion as the end goal of his life. He then became the chief example of how Christians should be willing to allow fellow Christians with their poorer understanding of the gospel to limit what they do as that which would be most pleasing to them.

³⁸⁰ ὅσα γὰρ ᾠροῦντο ἡμεῖς εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν διδασκαλίαν ἔγραψεν, ἵνα διὰ τῆς ὑπομονῆς καὶ ὁδὸς τῆς παρακλήσεως τῶν γραφῶν τὴν ἐλπίδα ἔχωμεν – Paul comments that something like Psalm 69:9, written long before he and his readers lived, exists for the purpose of instructing Paul and his readers. It is part of the “scriptures,” the inerrant and authoritative communication of God through the Jews to themselves and all others (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16). Thus, by following and obeying the OT, the NT believer assures himself that he will obtain the eternal mercy and life which God has promised and guaranteed to those who qualify through their belief.

³⁸¹ ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς ὑπομονῆς καὶ τῆς παρακλήσεως δώῃ ὑμῖν τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν ἀλλήλοις κατὰ Ἰησοῦν – Paul refers to God as the one who sovereignly provides perseverance of belief and persuasion of the truth to authentic believers. And he desires that God will provide the Roman Christians equality of great knowledge and understanding according to what Jesus himself has and would teach about his being the Messiah with its implications. This, of course, would solve the problem stated in chapters 14 & 15 in a heartbeat.

Certainly we can assume that Christians will always disagree on something in regard to the truth of the Bible. But patiently and lovingly we should work towards agreement and an accurate understanding of the biblical message. It is also self-evident that God is the one who can bring about complete theological agreement among Christians, if He were to choose to do so. But it is

also clear from Christian history that He has not done this. And it looks as though the situation will remain this way until Jesus returns.

³⁸² ἵνα ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐν ἐνὶ στόματι δοξάζητε τὸν θεὸν καὶ πατέρα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – If the Roman believers had an equal and great level of knowledge and understanding of the gospel, then they would also demonstrate the glory, magnificence, and awesomeness of God with equal actions and speech. They would be fully unified in their Christianity, which we notice is not an absolute requirement for their salvation but is merely a bonus to their lives and their expression of worship towards God.

³⁸³ Διὸ προσλαμβάνεσθε ἀλλήλους, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς προσελάβετο ὑμᾶς εἰς δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ – But they can still demonstrate the magnificence of God in the midst of their different levels of understanding the gospel by fully accepting each other as *bona fide* believers who stand equally accepted before God, just as Jesus demonstrated that he fully accepts them in the midst of their complete lack of understanding of the gospel and belief in God. If Jesus can die for unbelievers, Christians should be able to sacrifice their selfish desire to go beyond the religious limits of their fellow Christians.

Paul is implying that everything he has written about the gospel of the Messiah, i.e., that Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return is the basis for any sinner's salvation from God's wrath and condemnation is what all Christians will hold in common in the midst of other theological differences.

³⁸⁴ λέγω γὰρ Χριστὸν διάκονον γεγενῆσθαι περιτομῆς ὑπὲρ ἀληθείας θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ βεβαιῶσαι τὰς ἐπαγγελίας τῶν πατέρων – Paul next says that all this can be expressed with the idea that first Jesus has served the Jews through his death in order that he be the ground of God's fulfilling all His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which promises include the land, the nation, and their eventually being the greatest nation in human history—all which God will demonstrate when Jesus returns.

³⁸⁵ τὰ δὲ ἔθνη ὑπὲρ ἐλέους δοξάσαι τὸν θεόν, καθὼς γέγραπται διὰ τοῦτο ἐξομολογήσομαι σοι ἐν ἔθνεσιν ἡ καὶ τῷ ὀνόματί σου ψαλῶ – Similarly, Paul says that Jesus has served the Gentiles so that they too may demonstrate God's glory and magnificence, especially with respect to His eternal mercy. Paul also quotes 2 Samuel 22:40 and Psalm 18:49 to the effect that David told God that he as the Messiah would speak of Him to the Gentiles. Thus, Jesus has done also through his words, deeds, and crucifixion, drawing the Gentiles into the community of the children of God who are granted mercy and rescued from eternal condemnation—without any obligation to the Mosaic Covenant.

Paul's syntax is a bit weird, that he uses the accusative plural τὰ δὲ ἔθνη with the conjunction δὲ rather than the genitive plural as in the previous verse with περιτομῆς to indicate that Jesus the Messiah has become the servant (διάκονον γεγενῆσθαι) of the Gentiles just as much as he has the "circumcision." But this seems to be the drift of his argument.

³⁸⁶ καὶ πάλιν λέγει· εὐφρανθήτε, ἔθνη, μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ – Paul then quotes Deuteronomy 32:43 where Moses exhorts the Gentiles to rejoice in Yahweh because He avenges the wrongs perpetrated on the Jews. Whoever mistreats God's people, the Jews, will pay for their evil when God judges and punishes them. This implies also that God will fulfill His promises to Abraham to make of the Jews the greatest nation in history.

³⁸⁷ καὶ πάλιν ᾠνεῖτε, πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, τὸν κύριον καὶ ἑπαινεσάτωσαν αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ λαοί – Next Paul quotes Psalm 117:1 which commands the Gentiles to praise Yahweh. Indeed, they do this as a result of acknowledging Jesus as their king and priest.

³⁸⁸ καὶ πάλιν Ἡσαΐας λέγει· ἔσται ἡ ρίζα τοῦ Ἰεσσαὶ καὶ ὁ ἀνιστάμενος ἄρχειν ἐθνῶν, ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἔθνη ἐλπιοῦσιν – The final quote by Paul is of Isaiah 11:10 where the prophet indicates that the real hope of the Gentiles is the descendant of Jesse and David who is their Messiah and king to whom they will submit. As Paul has been explaining in this letter, it is through Jesus that the Gentiles obtain God's eternal mercy just as much as the Jews do.

³⁸⁹ Ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς ἐλπίδος πληρώσαι ὑμᾶς πάσης χαρᾶς καὶ εἰρήνης, ἐν τῷ πιστεύειν, εἰς τὸ περισσεύειν ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἐλπίδι ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος ἁγίου – Paul ends this long section regarding the Gentile Christians who have a better understanding of the gospel than their fellow Jewish Christians by praying that God will grant the former, his readers in Rome, joy and a sense of their future shalom in the eternal kingdom of God in the midst of their believing the gospel of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. As a result he would want them to be like cups being filled with a liquid to the extent that they overflow with the confidence that God will faithfully get them through to the end of their lives by His power by causing their belief to persevere through all the circumstances of life.

³⁹⁰ Πέπεισμαι δέ, ἀδελφοί μου, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐγὼ περὶ ὑμῶν ὅτι καὶ αὐτοὶ μεστοὶ ἐστε ἁγαθωσύνης, πεπληρωμένοι πάσης ᾠδῆς γνῶσεως, δυνάμενοι καὶ ἀλλήλους νουθετεῖν – However these new Christians in Rome came by their understanding of the gospel and which they embraced before this letter, Paul is sure that they are authentic in their belief and that they have enough information to encourage one another to stay true to the apostolic message—in spite of the fact that they have not heard the gospel from an apostle or perhaps even from one of Paul's close associates such as Timothy.

This must be very encouraging to them and to us also, that it is possible to acquire an adequate understanding of the good news of Jesus as Messiah and Savior apart from hearing directly from a living apostle. The Roman Christians heard the gospel through Christians who were at least contemporaneous with the apostles. We hear it through either the Bible if we read it or through others who have learned it through their or other's study of the Bible. But a quick glance at the NT letters reveals how easy it is to get the message wrong so that we should all be encouraged to study the Bible as diligently as possible and to be humble in our knowledge because of how difficult the Bible is to understand correctly.

³⁹¹ τολμώτερον δὲ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ἀπὸ μέρους ὡς ἐπαναμνησκὼν ὑμᾶς διὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ – Nevertheless, Paul has wanted to make sure that the Roman Christians are grounded in the information which he included in this letter. And he did so in the light of the fact that he has been graced by God with the gift and responsibility of being the apostle to the Gentiles. He knows his stuff, and he has desired that they know theirs as well as he does.

³⁹² εἰς τὸ εἶναι με λειτουργὸν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, ἱεουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα ᾠγένηται ἡ προσφορὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν ὡς εὐπρόσδεκτος, ἡγιασμένη ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ – Paul is explicit that the gift which God has conveyed to him is a kind of active worship of God (liturgical) as a servant of Jesus as the Messiah, and this specifically for the sake of his presenting the apostolic message to the Gentiles. In this way he brings Gentiles into the community of believers and is able to offer them of sorts as a priest to God. In addition, he describes the Gentiles who become believers (or who like the Roman Christians become better grounded believers intellectually) as those people in whom the Spirit of God has worked and made different from the rest of the world by causing them to become authentic in their belief and commitment to God and His plans and purposes.

Paul is implying that the Holy Spirit motivates people to want to know the truth accurately, so that these Roman Christians will work at learning what he has written and add any new thoughts of the gospel to their existing understanding.

³⁹³ ἔχω οὖν [τὴν] καύχησιν ἐν Χριστῷ Ὁ Ἰησοῦ τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν – Because Paul has the enjoyment of watching God use him in the process of drawing Gentiles to Himself, he can “boast” or brag about what God does in these situations, not because Paul is so great, but because God is so magnificent in His dispensing of His grace.

³⁹⁴ οὐ γὰρ τολμήσω τι λαλεῖν ὃν οὐ κατεργάσατο Χριστὸς δι’ ἐμοῦ τῷ εἰς ὑπακοὴν ἐθνῶν, λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ – As a result, Paul does not brag about any other accomplishment in his life apart from his fulfilling his responsibility to speak the apostolic message to Gentiles. For Paul, it is all about the Messiah and what he through the work of the Father accomplishes in the Gentiles with regard to their belief and obedience to God—in both what they say and what they do in the 1st century Roman Empire. This is quite something in the light of the large numbers of people who are polytheists and pagans in Paul’s day. To watch some of them readily convert to believing and following the Jewish Messiah must have been a real thrill for Paul.

³⁹⁵ ἐν δυνάμει τῷ σημείῳ καὶ τεράτων, ἐν δυνάμει πνεύματος [θεοῦ] ὥστε ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ κύκλῳ μέχρι τοῦ Ἰλλυρικοῦ πεπληρωμένοι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ – Paul indicates that God, by means of His Holy Spirit, has been and continues to work miracles through him to confirm the message of Jesus which he presents to the Gentiles. And God is doing this for the purpose of extending the territory in which this message is heard—from Jerusalem in the land of Israel to Illyricum on the western coast of northern Greece, which is approximately the same as modern Albania.

³⁹⁶ οὕτως δὲ φιλοτιμούμενον εὐαγγελίζεσθαι οὐχ ὅπου ὀνομάσθη Χριστός, ἵνα μὴ ἐπ’ ἀλλότριον θεμέλιον οἰκοδομῶ – Paul recognizes that others are traveling and speaking about the apostolic message where he has not. Therefore, he targets areas where they have not gone for his own presenting of this information to Gentiles who have not yet heard it. If God’s purpose for him is to be the apostle to the Gentiles, then as many as he can reach, this is his goal.

³⁹⁷ ἀλλὰ καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι οὐκ ἀνηγγέλη περὶ αὐτοῦ ὥσονται, καὶ οἱ οὐκ ἀκηκόασιν συνήσουσιν – Paul quotes Isaiah 52:15 where the prophet comments on the suffering servant, the Messiah, who will affect many nations of Gentiles (and the Jews) when they who have not heard about him yet will hear (and believe!). Indeed, even kings and those in high positions of authority in the world will shut their mouths and be awestruck when they learn about the Jewish Messiah—and when the Spirit of God opens their hearts and minds to the truth.

³⁹⁸ Διὸ καὶ ἐνεκοπήμην τὰ πολλὰ τοῦ ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς – Because Paul has wanted to go only where the gospel has not yet been presented to the Gentiles, he has not been able to travel to Rome.

³⁹⁹ νυνὶ δὲ μηκέτι τόπον ἔχων ἐν τοῖς κλίμασι τούτοις, ἐπιποθίαν δὲ ἔχων τοῦ ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ πολλῶν ἐτῶν – However, Paul has covered pretty much all the territory from Jerusalem to Illyricum and he has been wanting to go to Rome and visit these Christians to whom he is writing this letter.

⁴⁰⁰ ὥς ἂν πορεύομαι εἰς τὴν Σπανίαν τῷ ἐλπίζω γὰρ διαπορευόμενος θεάσασθαι ὑμᾶς καὶ ὑφ’ ὑμῶν προπεμφθῆναι ἐκεῖ ἐὰν ὑμῶν πρῶτον ἀπὸ μέρους ἐμπλησθῶ – Paul’s goal is to make it as far as Spain and to be helped in getting there by the Roman Christians when he stops by Rome on his way there. Thus, he will be able to enjoy the mutual fellowship of these Roman Christians (cf. Romans 1:9-13).

If Paul never made it to Spain, and it seems that he did not, then this is a good case of a Christian’s desiring to do something good and valuable and yet God denies him the opportunity to fulfill his desire. And this even happened to an apostle!

⁴⁰¹ Νυνὶ δὲ πορεύομαι εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ διακονῶν τοῖς ἁγίοις – Before he can go to Spain, Paul says that he must first head to Jerusalem and deliver a financial gift to them (cf. 2 Corinthians 8-10).

⁴⁰² εὐδόκησαν γὰρ Μακεδονία καὶ Ἀχαΐα κοινωνίαν τινὰ ποιήσασθαι εἰς τοὺς πτωχοὺς τῶν ἁγίων τῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ – Paul says that it has been specifically the Christians in northern and southern Greece who are making a financial donation to the struggling believers in Jerusalem and on the land of Israel. And he is carrying this gift to them.

⁴⁰³ εὐδόκησαν γὰρ καὶ ὀφειλέται εἰσὶν αὐτῶν εἰ γὰρ τοῖς πνευματικοῖς αὐτῶν ἐκοινωνήσαν τὰ ἔθνη, ὀφείλουσιν καὶ ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς λειτουργῆσαι αὐτοῖς – Paul says that the Gentiles have recognized that they are indebted to the Jewish Christians for the gospel of the Jewish Messiah, making them obligated to support them financially in their hour of need back in Jerusalem. As a result, they have been glad to do so. The gift of the gospel to the Greek Christians by the Jewish Christians is worth at least a monetary gift in return.

⁴⁰⁴ τοῦτο οὖν ἐπιτελέσας καὶ σφραγισάμενος αὐτοῖς τὸν καρπὸν τοῦτον, ἀπελεύσομαι δι’ ὑμῶν εἰς Σπανίαν – Paul’s plan is to convey this Greek Christians’ gift to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem and then turn right around (hopefully) and head to Spain by passing through Rome and getting the opportunity to spend some time with the Christians to whom he is writing this letter.

⁴⁰⁵ οἶδα δὲ ὅτι ἐρχόμενος πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν πληρώματι εὐλογίας Χριστοῦ ἐλεύσομαι – Whenever Paul finally makes it to Rome, he knows that it will be just the right time when he should do so, as God has planned for him as that which fills out his apostolic obligation to the Gentile Christians there. Thus, not a minute sooner or later will be the correct time for him to visit

them. In addition, he will be bringing his understanding of the gospel and his ability to continue educating them in it so as to enhance their understanding and faith.

⁴⁰⁶ Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς ὅ, ἀδελφοί, διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ πνεύματος συναγωνίσασθαι μοι ἐν ταῖς προσευχαῖς ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ πρὸς τὸν θεόν – With all these plans in mind which Paul has related to the Roman Christians, he asks that they pray to God for his success in performing all that he desires to do, including not running afoul of the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, which would taint his visit there to the Jewish Christians. Unfortunately, he does unintentionally stir up trouble for himself, so that he is arrested by the Romans and makes it to Rome only after appealing to Caesar (cf. Acts 21ff.).

⁴⁰⁷ ἵνα ῥυθῶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπειθούντων ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ ἡ διακονία μου ἡ εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ εὐπρόσδεκτος τοῖς ἀγίοις γένηται –

⁴⁰⁸ ἵνα ἐν χαρᾷ ἐλθὼν πρὸς ὑμᾶς διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ συναναπαύσωμαι ὑμῖν – Ironically, Paul is not “delivered from those who are disobedient in Judea,” but they target him in order to do away with him. Fortunately, the Romans take him into custody, and he eventually spends two years in prison in Caesarea Maritima. Afterwards, the Romans transfer him to Rome to stand trial before Caesar Nero. All this is not exactly the way that Paul had hoped to go to Rome and serve the Christians there, but it obviously happens according to God’s plans and purposes (cf. Acts 21-28). Paul hoped to be refreshed in his travels by the Christian community in Rome on his way to Spain. But again this is not exactly how things turned out for him.

⁴⁰⁹ Ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν, ὁ ἀμήν. – Paul ends the body of this letter with an appeal to God to grant shalom, i.e., eternal life, to the Romans Christians with the confidence of belief which genuine believers can have.

⁴¹⁰ Συνίστημι ὅδε ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὗσαν ὁ[καὶ] διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς – While it would be easy to think that the Christians in this list live in Rome, even after first being expelled as a result of the edict of Claudius in A.D. 49 and then returning in A.D. 59, it makes more sense to see this letter as being written by Paul in this latter year, and then being sent via Phoebe, a citizen of Cenchrea who is being accompanied by all these Jewish Christians who are now returning to Rome. And they are able to do so since the edict has expired ten years after its inception according to government policy. Therefore, Paul wants the Gentile Christians to greet these Jewish Christians who will be joining their community of believers in in Jesus the Messiah in the capital city.

⁴¹¹ ἵνα αὐτὴν προσδέξησθε ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως τῶν ἀγίων καὶ παραστήτε αὐτῇ ἐν ᾧ ἂν ὑμῶν χρήζη πράγματι καὶ γὰρ αὐτὴ προστάτις πολλῶν ἐγενήθη καὶ ἐμοῦ αὐτοῦ – Paul wants the Roman Christians to welcome and give the utmost hospitality to Phoebe. She has been very supportive of other Christians, including Paul.

⁴¹² Ἀσπάσασθε Πρίσκαν καὶ Ἀκύλαν τοὺς συνεργούς μου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ – Paul’s fellow apostolic coworkers are those who are returning to Rome.

⁴¹³ οἵτινες ὑπὲρ τῆς ψυχῆς μου τὸν ἑαυτῶν τράχηλον ὑπέθηκαν, οἷς οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος εὐχαριστῶ ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τῶν ἐθνῶν – Paul says that Prisca and Aquila have risked their lives for the gospel and him, and they have therefore been very helpful to the Gentile Christian communities where Paul has journeyed.

⁴¹⁴ καὶ τὴν κατ’ οἶκον αὐτῶν ἐκκλησίαν. ἀσπάσασθε Ἐπαίνετον τὸν ἀγαπητόν μου, ὃς ἐστιν ἀπαρχὴ τῆς Ἀσίας εἰς Χριστόν – Prisca and Aquila have welcomed a gathering of Christians in their home, and Paul wants the Roman Christians to welcome Epānetus who was the first believer in western Turkey, probably through his own presentation of the gospel.

⁴¹⁵ ἀσπάσασθε Μαρίαν, ἥτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν εἰς ὑμᾶς – A woman by the name of Mary has worked hard for the Roman Christians, perhaps through her prayers for them.

⁴¹⁶ ἀσπάσασθε Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ Ἰουνίαν τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου καὶ συναιχμαλώτους μου, οἵτινές εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, οἱ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ – Paul’s Jewish relatives Adronicus and Junia have experienced prison for their faith and are well-known among the other apostles. They became believers in Jesus before Paul did.

⁴¹⁷ ἀσπάσασθε Ἀμπλιᾶτον τὸν ἀγαπητόν μου ἐν κυρίῳ –

⁴¹⁸ ἀσπάσασθε Οὐρβανὸν τὸν συνεργὸν ἡμῶν ἐν Χριστῷ καὶ Στάχυν τὸν ἀγαπητόν μου –

⁴¹⁹ ἀσπάσασθε Ἀπελλὴν τὸν δόκιμον ἐν Χριστῷ. ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἐκ τῶν Ἀριστοβούλου – Changing the style of his comments about these people who are traveling to Rome, Paul refers to the fact that Apelles has found approval before God, meaning that Paul is convinced that he has authentic belief.

⁴²⁰ ἀσπάσασθε Ἡρωδίωνα τὸν συγγενὴ μου. ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἐκ τῶν Ναρκίσσου τοὺς ὄντας ἐν κυρίῳ –

⁴²¹ ἀσπάσασθε Τρύφαιναν καὶ Τρυφῶσαν τὰς κοπιώσας ἐν κυρίῳ. ἀσπάσασθε Περσίδα τὴν ἀγαπητήν, ἥτις πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν ἐν κυρίῳ –

⁴²² ἀσπάσασθε Ροῦφον τὸν ἐκλεκτὸν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐμοῦ –

⁴²³ ἀσπάσασθε Ἀσύγκριτον, Φλέγοντα, Ἑρμῆν, Πατροβᾶν, Ἑρμᾶν καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀδελφούς –

⁴²⁴ ἀσπάσασθε Φιλόλογον καὶ Ἰουλίαν, Νηρέα καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτοῦ, καὶ Ὀλυμπᾶν καὶ τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς πάντας ἀγίους –

⁴²⁵ ἀσπάσασθε ἀλλήλους ἐν φιλήματι ἀγίῳ. ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς αἱ ἐκκλησίαι πᾶσαι τοῦ Χριστοῦ. – Paul ends this list of people who are journeying to Rome with an exhortation for them to greet each other as they will be greeting these people whom he has just listed. In addition, he conveys that all the gatherings of Christians in other areas of the Roman Empire who are aware of them in Rome greet them in a similar manner.

⁴²⁶ Παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, σκοπεῖν τοὺς τὰς διχοστασίας καὶ τὰ σκάνδαλα παρὰ τὴν διδασκίαν ἣν ὑμεῖς ἐμάθετε καὶ ποιοῦντας, καὶ ἐκκλίνετε ἀπ’ αὐτῶν – Paul’s main concern in this letter has been to teach his Gentile readers that they are not at all obligated to the Mosaic Covenant as part of what God requires for them to obtain His eternal mercy. Here he again urges them to avoid anyone, no matter how sincere and correct the person may sound, who tries to convince them otherwise.

⁴²⁷ οἱ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν Χριστῷ οὐ δουλεύουσιν ἀλλὰ τῇ ἑαυτῶν κοιλίᾳ, καὶ διὰ τῆς χρηστολογίας ‘καὶ εὐλογίας’ ἐξαπατῶσιν τὰς καρδίας τῶν ἀκάκων – The spiritual explanation by Paul for what is going on with these people is that they are following their own sinful passions instead of the truth about the Messiah—that only Jesus can rescue sinners from God’s condemnation. No one’s obedience to the Mosaic Covenant is the basis of their salvation. Nevertheless, these false teachers easily come across by their manner of speaking as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and good leaders, encouraging people in their submission to them by making them feel good about themselves because they are so wonderfully following the “truth.”

⁴²⁸ ἢ γὰρ ὑμῶν ὑπακοὴ εἰς πάντας ἀφίκετο· ‘ἐφ’ ὑμῖν οὖν χαίρω’, ‘θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς σοφοὺς ἔχειν εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀκεραίους δὲ εἰς τὸ κακόν – Once again (cf. Romans 1:8ff.) Paul applauds the Roman Christians for their belief and the fact that it has become well-known throughout the areas where he has visited (and possibly areas where others have traveled and presented the apostolic message and reported to Paul that the knowledge of the Roman Christians’ faith has spread far and wide). In line with the issue of the false teachers he has just mentioned, Paul is delighted by the Roman Christians’ authentic belief and grasp of the truth and desires that they continue in such a manner. He urges them to remain attracted to what is truly good and to reject what is truly evil, thus further demonstrating the authenticity of their belief.

⁴²⁹ ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ‘συντρίψει τὸν σατανᾶν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας ὑμῶν ἐν τάχει. Ὡς χάρις τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἡμεῶν’ – Paul implies that Satan is the great adversary of God and His people. Two options for what Paul means by God’s quickly crush Satan under these Christians’ feet—1) When Jesus returns (also implied), God will first destroy Satan’s current influence in the world by locking him in the abyss and then eventually completely destroy him after the millennial kingdom (cf. Revelation 20), or 2) this is metaphorical for the Christians’ conquering Satan by rejecting his lies by virtue of their persevering faith and grasping and becoming committed to the important teaching by Paul in this letter.

Whether Paul means by ἐν τάχει either “soon” or “quickly,” either option works, but I think I lean towards #1 just as Paul stated in 13:11 that “our salvation is nearer than when we believed.” Jesus’ return (and any Christian’s death) is always nearer every day, and this what we need to keep our eye on. Paul tells the Thessalonians that they have turned from idols to the one true God “to wait for His Son from heaven, who will rescue us from the wrath to come.”

Paul also wants his readers to continue in the grace of God which God Himself will cause to happen according to His faithfulness and in the light of Jesus as the Messiah.

⁴³⁰ Ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Τιμόθεος ὁ συνεργός μου καὶ Λούκιος καὶ Ἰάσων καὶ Σωσίπατρος οἱ συγγενεῖς μου – We know that these four men are with Paul on his journey to Jerusalem.

⁴³¹ ἀσπάζομαι ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ Τέρτιος ὁ γράψας τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἐν κυρίῳ – Paul’s secretary who has been writing down his words, Tertius, now personally sends his own greetings to the Roman Christians.

⁴³² ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Γάιος ὁ ξένος μου καὶ ὅλης τῆς ἐκκλησίας· ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς Ἐραστος ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως καὶ Κούαρτος ὁ ἀδελφός. – And Tertius mentions that these three other men greet them too. Gaius is the city treasurer of Cenchrea. Quartus must be his brother.

⁴³³ ἢ χάρις τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν. ἀμήν – This verse is in only the Majority Text and is probably the true end of the letter. Tertius ends his parting words to the Roman Christians by wishing that God’s grace remain constant with them—just as Paul did in v. 20.

⁴³⁴ [Τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ ὑμᾶς στηρίζαι κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν μυστηρίου χρόνοις αἰωνίοις σεσιγημένου – If Paul wrote this, he starts a doxology identifying God as the one who is powerful enough to have changed the Gentile Romans from worshipers of pagan idols to worshipers of Himself and to continue to ground them in their belief in the apostolic message of Jesus as the Messiah. This message is in line with God’s revealing what was not so clear in the OT to that which has become clear to the apostles through the appearance of the Messiah and his teaching and actions.

⁴³⁵ φανερωθέντος δὲ νῦν διὰ τε γραφῶν προφητικῶν καὶ ἐπιταγῆν τοῦ αἰωνίου θεοῦ εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη γνωρισθέντος – The OT writers spoke of the Messiah, and God all along intended to inject the Messiah into human history so that the information about him could become directly available to even the Gentiles so that they could believe in him and live their lives in obedience to God by pursuing morality.

⁴³⁶ μόνῳ σοφῷ θεῷ, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν] – The doxology ends by ascribing eternal magnificence to God who is the only God and wise beyond our comprehension of wisdom, especially when we take into account Jesus as the Messiah and all that his existence means.]