

Romans Study

Author: Paul, actually penned by Tertius. With Paul was Timothy, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater.

Place of writing: Corinth during Paul's third missionary journey. Timothy and Erastus had been sent ahead from Ephesus into Macedonia. (Acts 19:22) Believers in the city sending their greeting with those of Tertius who was penning the letter: Gaius who had provided hospitality to the group, Erastus who was the director of the city's public works, and Quartus. Gaius is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14 as one of the first people believers in Corinth and baptized by Paul. It was probably carried by Phoebe, a servant / deaconess in the church in Cenchrea (which was Corinth's eastern seaport). When he wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, he urges them to complete their collection to assist the Jerusalem believers before he arrives. (1 Cor 16:1-4) At the writing of Romans, the collection appears to be complete and Paul is ready to take it to Jerusalem. (Rom 15:23-28)



Date: Winter of 57 AD during Paul's three months in Corinth before heading back to Troas and Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem with the money collected to assist the believers there.

Recipients: Believers in Rome (and possibly those who will become believers). From the writings of Suetonius, a Roman historian who lived from 70 to 130 AD, the Roman Caesar Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome in 49 AD. Luke, in Acts 18:2, mentions this as the reason Aquila and Priscilla had left Rome and settled in Corinth where Paul met them. They appear to have been believers when Paul met them, so they were possibly part of a church at Rome. That church may have gotten its start from the Jews who had been in Jerusalem on Pentecost (30 AD) when the Holy Spirit empowered the believers to speak in other languages and share the gospel to people from around the known world, including Jews from Rome. The church at Rome probably included Gentiles with the Jews but Paul desired to have a harvest of believers from other Gentiles just as he had done throughout Asia Minor. (Rom 1:11-13) Aquila and Priscilla appear to be in Rome at this time and have a church meeting in their home. (Rom 16:3-5) Over half of the names of people to whom Paul sends greeting are Latin and Greek. This also indicates there was a church at Rome consisting of Jews and Gentiles.

Purpose of writing: Paul planned to go on a missionary journey to Spain after taking the collection to the believers in Jerusalem. He had wanted to visit with the Roman church since their faith had been reported throughout the world (Rom 1:8) and he wished to strengthen them (Rom 1:11-13). He also hoped they would assist him on his journey (Rom 15:24, 28-29). Since the book has so many doctrinal teachings, he may have been addressing problems they were facing as well as desiring to strengthen their faith. The book of Romans presents a fuller statement of Paul's teaching of the gospel message and how people (Jews and Gentiles) are saved by it and live by it.

Theme statement: Rom 1:16-17. He is not ashamed of the gospel which is the power of God for the salvation of Jews and Gentiles, and reveals how the righteous will live by faith.

Romans has been described as an exposition of the Old Testament in view of the Gospel of Christ.

After giving his introduction and purpose for writing to the Romans, Paul proceeds, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to use the Hebrew scriptures and the ability he learned from his early education and his training with Gamaliel to present logical arguments that show how God has interacted with mankind in the past and how he now is interacting with mankind through Jesus. His basic pattern throughout the book shows atonement by God, peace with God, and dedication to God. Here is a basic overview of Paul's pattern as presented by Dr. Allen Ross, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament.

Chapter 1, verses 18 - 32

Beginning here, Paul shows God's wrath against mankind because of their failure to recognize him as God and give him the control he deserves.

Vs 18. God's wrath is revealed against the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. Because Adam and Eve listened to Satan and desired to be god for themselves, all mankind has inherited a dead spirit from them and deny God's right to be in control so they can be in control and decide for themselves what is right and wrong.

Vs 19 - 20. What may be known about God is plain because he has made it plain to them. The intricate detail in which the entire universe is created displays a mind with knowledge that surpasses that of all mankind and a power that exceed the power within the whole universe. Since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen from what has been made. This explains why all cultures around the world search for God and a way to worship him. But, since they see him in many parts of his creation, they worship his creation instead of him.

Vs 21. Even though mankind knew God, they neither glorified him nor gave him thanks. This deals with the descendants of Adam and Eve before the flood and how they failed to listen to what they were told about God by Adam and Eve and followed their own desires to be god and determine what is right and wrong.

Vs 22 - 23. They claimed to be wise and from the account in Genesis we know they developed farming, metal working, and many other skills. But they became fools because they failed to recognize God as ruler of the universe and everything in it. Instead, they made images like man and animals to worship.

Vs 24 – 25. So because God gave mankind free will, he allowed them to make the bad choices that led them into following all the sinful desires of their hearts, even to sexual impurity and the degrading of their bodies. Thus mankind exchanged the truth for a lie and worshiped created things rather than God, the Creator.

Vs 26 – 27. Because mankind worshiped created things, God allowed them to exchange the natural relationship that he had created between men and women and sink into the perversion of women having sexual relations with women and men having sexual relations with men.

Vs 28 - 32. As a summary of man's downward slide from the truth about God into the depravity of their own perverted ways, Paul says God "gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done." So he describes man as becoming filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice; gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; inventing

ways of doing evil; disobeying parents; senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless. Not only do they know God's righteous decree that acting that way (disobeying God) deserves death, but they encourage others to do those things with them.

In Chapter 1, Paul has shown that all people naturally follow the nature they inherited from Adam and Eve to be god for themselves and decide what is right and wrong. That the people of the world (Gentiles) are all evil was the belief held by the Jews and Paul has essentially said he agreed.

Chapter 2

In this section of his letter, Paul begins to announce God's righteous judgment, but as he announces it he warns his readers about judging others.

Vs 1 - 4. Paul says we have no excuse and no reason to judge others because we are doing the same thing as the people we are judging. We have all disobeyed God and deserve his judgment. God's judgment is based on truth, so when we pass judgment and then do the same thing there is no reason to believe we will escape God's judgment. Then he asks if we show contempt for God's rich kindness, tolerance, and patience because we don't realize it leads us to repent (change our minds) about how we have been disobeying him.

Vs 5 – 11. Paul says we are storing up wrath against us because of our stubbornness and unrepentant heart. He tells us that in his judgment God will give to each person what he deserves according to what he has done. If a person persists in doing good to seek glory, honor and immortality, God will give him eternal life. But those who are self-seeking, reject the truth, and follow evil God will give his wrath and anger. Then Paul goes on to say there will be trouble for everyone doing evil, first for the Jew and then for the Gentile. But there will be glory, honor and peace for everyone doing good, first for the Jew and then for the Gentile. And he proclaims that God does not show favoritism. This would have been hard for Jews to believe because they have God's word and evidence from history that they are his chosen people. But what they would fail to remember from their history was that they were to be a light for the rest of the world to show people how to live in obedience to God, but that when they disobeyed, he also disciplined them like he did the other people who disobeyed. Being God's chosen people didn't them to right to do what other people were doing and disobey God's will. So they should be careful about judging other because all who disobey will be judged, whether Jew or Gentile.

Vs 12 – 16. The Jews would be thinking about the fact that they were given God's law so that would make them better in God's sight than the Gentiles. So Paul tells them it isn't having or hearing the law that makes a person righteous in God's sight, but only the obeying of the law. And he says that those who don't have the law, but by nature do what is required by the law show that they have the law written on their hearts. So "all who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from it, and all how sin under the law will be judged by the law."

Vs. 17 – 24. Paul now goes on to discuss the hypocrisy of the Jews. Here he takes the Jews to task for disobeying the very law they say makes them better than the Gentiles. He says, if you call yourself a Jew, rely on the law, brag about your relationship to God and that you know his will from the law, but then break the very law you teach others, you are dishonoring God and blaspheming his name among the Gentiles.

Vs 25 – 29. Next he takes on the Jewish idea that the circumcision that identified them as being under the covenant God had established with Abraham. He says circumcision only has value if you obey the law. Breaking the law makes a person be as if they had not been circumcised while obeying the law makes the person be regarded by God as if they were circumcised. Then he says the mark of a true Jew (one who is a part of the covenant) is not outward circumcision but the inward circumcision of the heart.

Chapter 3

Vs 1 – 8. Paul raises the objections and questions that he knows some of his readers will pose and answers them. First, what advantage is there in being a Jew or of being circumcised? The Jews were entrusted with the very words of God. That was a great privilege and they were supposed to be a light to everyone else showing them how to have a right relationship with God. What difference does it make if some of the Jews did not have faith and did not share God's words with the rest of the world? Can their lack of faith destroy God's faithfulness? Of course not! God continues to be faithful to the promises he has made. If he didn't keep them, then he would not be God but just another liar.

Second, if our unrighteousness shows God's righteousness then isn't it unjust for him to pour out his wrath on the unrighteous? A like question is: if my lies show God's truthfulness, why should I be condemned as a sinner for increasing his glory? Both of those are the same as saying: "Let us do evil that good may result" or, the modern day equivalent, "the end justifies the means." That logic leads us to relativism. Good is the opposite of evil. Right is the opposite of wrong. Good cannot be brought out of evil and right cannot be established by wrong. Unrighteousness and lying are both ways of trying to establish our own self as god rather than let God, the Creator, be God and in control of all he has created.

Vs 9 – 20. So are Gentiles in any better shape since they were not entrusted with God's word? Certainly not! Paul has already shown that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin because they all disobey God. He quotes Psalm 36 that "there is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God." Then he continues to quote Psalm 36 as it describes the wickedness of all mankind. That puts all of us in the same boat. He says that the purpose of the law is to make people conscious of their sin, the way their unrighteousness shows they disobey God.

Vs 21 – 31. Now he proclaims that there is a righteousness from God that has nothing to do with the law and he says that the Law and prophets testify to it. This righteousness comes through faith in Jesus and is given to all who believe and trust in the death of Jesus and the blood he shed to make atonement for their sin. It isn't given just to the Jews like the Law was, but is given to all who believe, Jew and Gentiles alike. So in what can we boast? Certainly not in having or even observing the law, but in faith alone because it is through faith that the circumcised (Jew) and the uncircumcised (Gentile) will be justified before God as righteous. Faith does not nullify the law but upholds it.

Chapter 4

Vs 1 – 8. Now Paul turns to the example of Abraham, the recognized beginning of the old covenant with God that is identified by circumcision. He asks what Abraham discovered in this matter of righteousness. If Abraham was justified before God by works then he had something about which to boast, but in Genesis 15:6 it says he believed God and righteousness was credited to him. Wages are given for work done because it is an obligation. But when a wicked man doesn't have any works and God still credits him with righteousness

because of his faith, it cannot be a result of his works. Then he reminds us that David wrote about the blessing to the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works in Psalm 32:1 and 2. So Paul is making the case that righteousness comes by faith.

Vs 9 – 12. Then he asks if the blessing is only for those who have been circumcised and reminds us that Abraham was credited with righteousness because of his faith before the covenant and circumcision began. So Abraham is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised so that righteousness might be credited to them like it was to Abraham. And he is also the father of all who are circumcised who also walk in faith as Abraham did before he was circumcised. Now, Paul is arguing that righteousness comes from faith, not the act of circumcision.

Vs 13 – 17. Now, Paul turns to discussing the law and he says it was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that they would be heir of the world. Instead of the law the promise was because of Abraham's righteousness that came by faith. If people become heirs by obeying the law, then faith has no value and the promise that was made based on faith is worthless. And where there is no law there can be no transgression. So the promise comes by faith so that it is by grace (an unmerited gift) that all of Abraham's offspring may receive, those of the law and those of faith. It was written in Genesis 17:5 that God would make Abraham the father of many nations. So, Paul says, in God's sight, Abraham is the father of all who believe in God who gives life to the dead and declares things as happened before they have. So Paul has argued that righteousness comes by faith and not by the law.

Vs 18 – 25. Now, Paul looks at Abraham's faith in the promise from God. In Genesis 15:4-6, God promised Abraham that he would have an heir from his own body even though he was about 100 years old and his wife Sarah was also old and past child-bearing. And he is promised that his heirs would be as numerous as the stars in the heaven. Then it is said that he believed the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness. Paul reminds us that Abraham was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God because of his belief in the promise and that God had the power to accomplish what was promised. Then Paul ends the example of Abraham by saying that the words "it was credited" were written not just for Abraham but for all to whom God credits righteousness for belief that he raised Jesus from the dead. Then he gives a concise statement of the gospel: "He (Jesus) was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

Chapter 5

Paul has shown that faith in God's promise provides righteousness before God because Jesus was the atoning sacrifice God promised and that was foreshadowed through the sacrificial system. Now, he is going to apply that to the present, past, and future.

Vs 1 – 5. Since we are justified before God through our faith in his promise, we have peace with God right now. This picks up on the Old Testament peace offering that was made after atonement for sin had been made through a blameless sacrifice. Peace with God comes only after atonement for sin has been made. We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God but also in our sufferings because recognize that suffering produces perseverance which results in character and ends up giving us hope. Our hope doesn't disappoint us because of the Holy Spirit which God has given us pours God's love into us.

Vs 6 – 8. In the past, we were powerless and without hope because we were all sinners before God. But God, when the time was right, sent his Son Jesus to die for everyone, even though they were still sinners. No one would need to die for a righteous man, and although someone might dare to die for a good man, who but God

would consider dying for those who were still in sin against him? But while we were yet sinners, God sent Jesus to die for us.

Vs 9 – 11. In the future, since we have been justified by Jesus' blood, how much more will we be saved from God's wrath? If God would send Jesus to die for us while we were still sinners, how much more will we be saved through his life after his resurrection? We also rejoice now because we have been reconciled with God.

Paul now starts to talk about sanctification, the process of being set apart as holy for God's use.

Vs 12 – 20. This discusses the reign of sin versus the reign of grace. Sin entered the world because of one man's sin. Death entered the world because of that sin. All people sin (try to be God for themselves) and thus will die. Thus, because of sin, death reigned from the time of Adam until the time of Moses, even though the "Law" had not been given. But the gift of God is righteousness that comes from faith in God's promise that was made complete in the death of Jesus (his burial and resurrection are proof that his death fulfilled the promise). If death reigned because of the sin of one man, how much more will God's gift of righteousness reign because of the death of one righteous sacrifice? Jesus' death brings justification (a right standing just as if you had never sinned) to everyone who, in faith, believes in God's promise of righteousness and lives accordingly. Just as the disobedience of one man brought condemnation for all men, so the obedience of one man (Jesus) brings righteousness to everyone who accepts it. Just as sin reigned in death, so grace (unmerited favor – gift) reigns in righteousness and brings eternal life through Jesus.

Chapter 6

Now Paul gives the rationale for sanctification.

Vs 1 – 14. First he poses the question: "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" And he gives an emphatic answer of NO. We died to sin so how can we live in it any longer? When we accept Jesus, we are joined with him (baptized into him). Since we have been united with him in his death, certainly we will be united with him in his resurrection. Our old self was crucified with him so that our body, in which sin reigned, would become powerless so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. Jesus was resurrected from the dead and he cannot die again and thus death has no power over him. If we died with Jesus, we believe that we also live with him. The death he died to sin, once for all so the life he lives is for all to live for God. This is the divine reckoning about sin in our body. Verse 11 gives how the believer should reckon sin in his body: "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." The believer's responsibility then is not to let sin reign in his body so that he follows its sinful desires (the desire to be God for himself). Instead of offering our body to sin as an instrument of wickedness, we should offer our body to God as an instrument of righteousness. He sums this up with this saying: "Sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace."

Vs 14 – 23. Now he poses the question: "Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" And again he gives an emphatic NO. If we offer ourselves to someone as slaves, we have to obey them. So, if we are slaves to sin (following what Satan wants us to do in disobeying God) then it leads to death just as the first sin led to death. But if we are slaves to righteousness (following what God wants us to do) then it leads to holiness (being set apart for God). So, he encourages that now we have been set free from sin and become slaves to God, the benefit is holiness which results in eternal life. Then he gives this verse that we often memorize. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Chapter 7

Now Paul shows the inability of the law to sanctify (make us set apart for God's use).

Vs 1 – 6. Here he gives our relationship with the law, beginning with an illustration from marriage, that the law only has authority as long as we live. But, since we died with Christ, as he said in 6:8, we also died to the law, and were raised from the dead with him so that we might be able to bear fruit to God. When we were controlled by our sinful nature, the law produced passions in us that bore fruit in our bodies that led to death. But by dying to what once controlled and bound us, we are released from the law and its penalty so that we serve in the way of the Spirit and not in the way of the written code of the law.

Vs 7 – 13. Now he shows us that the law was good but sterile. He asks if the law was sin and answers with a definite NO. In fact, we wouldn't know what sin is without the law. The law identifies what is right and wrong and then our sinful nature which desires to be god for ourselves and decide what is right and wrong leads us to disobey the law and thus brings death to us. The law is not sin but holy (set apart for God's use) and thus righteous and good. It caused sin to be recognized and become utterly sinful.

Vs 14 – 25. Now he shows that the flesh is bad and powerless but causes us to struggle with its sinful desires. The law is spiritual because it is of God, but we are unspiritual and slaves of sin. Paul admits that he struggles with the sinful desires of the flesh just like every person – what he wants to do he doesn't do and what he doesn't want to do he does because the sinful desires of the flesh are right there waging war against the good his mind wants to do. Thus he is a prisoner of the law of sin at work within his flesh. He cries out that he is a wretched man in this condition and asks who can rescue him from his body of death. His answer is that only Jesus, our Lord, can save us. Though in our mind we are a slave to God, in our flesh we are a slave of its sinful desires.

Chapter 8

Now he shows the power of the Spirit to sanctify us.

Vs 1 – 8. First, the Spirit has power over sin. What the law was powerless to do (sanctify us) because of our sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son (Jesus) in the likeness of man (fully human) so that he could be a sin offering (like the law required) and thus condemn sin in man. So, by being in Christ, thus living according to the Spirit, the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us. Those living according to the sinful nature have their minds set on doing what the flesh desires which is hostile to what God wants. But those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit (God) wants. The mind set on sinful things is dead and cannot submit to God's law, but the mind set on what the Spirit wants has life and peace with God. Anyone controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Vs 9 – 11. Second, the Spirit has power over death. Being in Christ, we are not controlled by the sinful nature but by the Spirit. Anyone who doesn't have the Spirit doesn't belong to Christ. But if Christ is in a person, their body is dead because of sin, but their spirit is alive because of God's Spirit living in them.

Vs 12 – 17. Third, the Spirit has power over the slavery of the sinful nature. Because the Spirit gives life to us, we have an obligation, but not to the sinful nature which enslaves us. We have an obligation to live by the Spirit and let him put to death the misdeeds (sin) of the body so that we will live. God's Spirit doesn't make us a slave to fear (that we must obey the sinful desires of the flesh and therefore die) but makes us God's children. Therefore we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Jesus of the glory of God's Kingdom. We share in Jesus' sufferings (sacrificial death) so that we may share in his glory in the Kingdom.

Vs 18 – 27. God provides our sanctification through the Spirit. Whatever we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory that will be revealed in us in God's Kingdom. All of creation waits for the sons of God (those who have been made alive by the Spirit living in them) to be revealed. All of creation was subjected to its curse not

by its own choice but because of the action of one man (Adam). Its hope is to be brought from bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of the children of God. Creation has been groaning like it is in childbirth up to the day of Christ's atoning work. Not only the creation, but believers (who have the Spirit living in them) groan as we wait for the redemption of our bodies (being made new like before Adam sinned). It is in this hope that we are saved (faith in the promise of God). Hope that is seen is not hope at all because you already have it. We hope for what we do not already have but wait patiently for it. The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We don't know what to pray and ask of God, but God's Spirit living in us knows our hearts and intercedes (asks) for us according to God's will for our lives.

Vs 28 – 39.

Now Paul sums up his teaching on sanctification. God works in all things for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. God is the one who knew from before the beginning of the world who would respond to his call to believe and follow him, and he justifies and glorifies them by his own power. So, if God is for us who has the power to really overcome us? If God went so far as to give us his own Son because he loved us, won't he also give us everything we need? So, who can condemn us since God justifies us? Can anyone bring a charge against us or can anything separate us from the love of Jesus? His answer to all these is "no" because in all these things we are more than just conquerors through the love of Jesus. So nothing can separate us from the love of God that has been given to us through Jesus.

Chapter 9

Beginning here and continuing through chapter 11, Paul gives a vindication of God's righteousness, beginning with how he dealt with Israel in the past.

Vs 1-5. First, Paul expresses his anguish over the fact his people are not believing and following God although they have been given such great privileges as the covenants, the law, the temple worship and many promises.

Vs 6-18. Then he answers the question: "Since the Jews have received all this from God, has God's word failed?" He shows that God did not choose all of Abraham's children to receive the promise, but only those from Isaac. And he only chose those descendants of Jacob, and not Esau's. In answer to the possible claim that God is unjust in his dealings, he quotes God's statement to Moses: "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy ..." That is a statement that God is sovereign so his decisions are unquestionable. Nothing the Jews (or any man) have is dependent on his own desires or efforts, but only on God's mercy (unmerited favor).

Vs 19-33. So he asks the question that could be on people's minds: "Why does God blame us since we can't resist his will?" And his reply is: "Who are you to talk back to the Creator or question his actions." Then he asks: "What if God did all this to make the riches of his glory known to those whom prepared in advance to receive his glory and called from both the Jews and Gentiles?" And he gives some quotes from the OT prophets that would back up his idea. So Gentiles, who didn't pursue righteous like the Jews, have obtained it by faith (just like Abraham), but Jews have not obtained it because they didn't pursue in faith but stumbled over the fact that Jesus is the Messiah.

Chapter 10

This chapter shows God's present dealing with Israel.

Vs 1-4. Israel has rejected God's salvation through faith in Jesus' work, but have sought to attain righteousness through their own actions. But Jesus' work is the end of the law so everyone who believes may be righteous.

Vs 5-13. Now he gives the conditions for salvation. Those who live by the law receive the righteousness that comes from it. He has already shown that no one can keep the law so anyone trying to receive righteousness by keeping the law will fail. The righteousness that comes by faith will simply confess that Jesus is Lord. So everyone who confesses that and believes that God raised him from the dead will be saved. It is with the heart that we believe and with our mouths that we confess the Lordship of Jesus. Then he quotes Joel 2:32 that “everyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” And he goes on to explain that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile because God will bless and save everyone who calls on his name.

Vs 14-21. Now he asks, “How can someone call on one in whom they have not believed and how they can believe in someone of whom they have not heard?” And he quotes Isaiah 53:1; “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.” This is the necessity for sharing the good news about Jesus. Now for God’s dealing with the Jews at that time, Paul says that not all the Israelites have accepted the good news. So he asks, “Did they not hear?” Then he quotes Psalm 19:4 about the voice going out to the whole world. So he asks, “Did they not understand?” Then he quotes Moses and Isaiah to show that they would be envious because those not seeking God would find him. Finally he quotes Isaiah speaking god’s word to Israel, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.” (Isa 65:2) This shows that God has given the Jews every opportunity to receive the righteousness that comes by faith in his promise just as Abraham received it. The same thing goes for everyone to whom the good news about Jesus is shared. Thus everyone is without excuse for their unbelief.

Chapter 11

Now he discusses God’s future dealing with Israel.

Vs 1-10. He asks, “Did God reject his people?” And the answer is “no” because Paul, himself, is a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin. He reminds us that Elijah thought he was the last one following God’s word, but that God told him there was a remnant that he had reserved for himself. So there is presently a remnant chosen by grace, not by works. For those who choose not to believe in faith, God allows them to be blinded by that lack of faith.

Vs 11-24. Now he shows that the failure of the Jews to believe in faith has led to opening the way for the Gentiles to become part of the inheritance of faith. He proclaims that he promotes his ministry in the hope that it will arouse the Jews to accept Jesus by faith. The Gentiles who are grafted into the promise to Abraham by faith in Jesus should not boast of their status because if God didn’t spare the natural descendants then he won’t spare them either. If the Gentiles could become part of the promise by faith in Jesus, how much easier will the natural descendants of Abraham become a renewed part of the promise by faith in Jesus?

Vs 25-36. Then he discusses God’s final dealing with Israel. He says that “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.” Thus, after that “all Israel will be saved.” He quotes Isaiah that the deliverer will come and turn godlessness away from the descendants of Jacob at that time. This foretells a time when Jesus would return and bring all the Jews alive at that time into a right relationship with God, the Father because he will be the Messiah they are expecting and will have faith in him. God has not forgotten his promise to the Jews, but he has mercy on everyone who is disobedient, yet in faith like Abraham, hears and obediently follows Jesus. He ends the discussion of God’s dealing with the Jews with a praise of the wisdom of God’s divine purposes.

Chapters 12 – 15:13

In the first part of the book, Paul has shown that no one is righteous because all have disobeyed God and fall short of the glory of God, a state of being which is necessary to have a right relationship with him. He has shown that obeying the law is impossible, and that trusting in the old covenant of circumcision or good works will not give you that right relationship. He discussed what righteousness is and that it comes through faith in God's promise and not from being descended from Abraham. He reviewed God's dealings with the Israelite people in the past, how God is dealing with them in the present, and how he will deal with them in the future to fulfill his promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. He has told us that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to provide a redeemer and that he has promised those who have faith in that promise, whether Jew or Gentile, will have a right relationship with God for eternity. Now, for those who have faith in God's promise, Paul describes God's righteousness at work in their lives, first in the assembly of believers, then in relation to government, and finally in relation to weak believers.

Chapter 12

Vs 1-2. Paul urges us to live consecrated lives. Because of the mercy God has shown us sending a perfect sacrifice (Jesus) to fulfill his promise of restoring people to a right relationship with him, we should offer him our bodies as living sacrifices, which he says is our spiritual worship. We shouldn't conform to the pattern of this world (the world's way of thinking and acting which follows Satan's plan to disobey God) but we should be transformed, have our minds renewed, so that we will be able to test and approve (determine) what God's will is so we can obey it. And we know that God's will is good, pleasing, and perfect.

Vs 3-8. Now, taking the idea of being a living sacrifice further, Paul urges that we not think too highly of ourselves. Paul had been given a tremendous amount of grace by God. He was persecuting and killing believers, but Jesus met him on the road to Damascus and called him to stop the persecution and become his instrument for spreading the word about Jesus to all the world, especially Gentiles (non-Jews). That was quite a change in status and it could have given him an exaggerated idea of his importance. To prevent this, God also allowed Satan to inflict him with something that Paul calls a "thorn in his side." This kept him humble and dependent on strength from the Holy Spirit to endure each day of his life. Paul wants us to remember that every believer is a part of the Church, the Bride of Christ, and uses the image of a body to explain how we function together as a whole. We have been given different gifts according to the grace that God has given us. Then he mentions some gifts and encourages us to use whatever we have been given to the best of our ability and for the good of the body.

Vs 9-21. Now he explains that love is what marks the consecrated life of being a living sacrifice, dedicated to God. This goes right with what Jesus said was the first and second greatest commands: love the Lord, your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. And he said that no one can show greater love than to give their life for another. Anyone who loves God must hate evil which is disobedience of God's way of living. Anyone who loves his neighbor must be devoted to and honor his fellow believers more than himself. Anyone who loves God will be so strongly seeking to use the gifts God's has given him to serve God and others that he would be called zealous, on fire, or committed. This way of living will result in being joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer, sharing with God's people who are in need, and practicing hospitality. It also results in being able to bless those who persecute you, rejoicing with those who rejoice, mourning with those who mourn, living in harmony and associating with people of lower status without becoming proud or conceited. Outside the body, it will result in not repaying anyone with evil for the evil they do to you. Instead, a living sacrifice will do what is right by God's standard in full view of everybody. And we should strive to live at peace with everyone as much as possible based on what we can do. We should let God be God and avenge the wrongs (disobedience) against him. If we are a living sacrifice, loving God and others, we will be able to overcome evil with good by feeding and giving drink to an enemy who is hungry or thirsty.

Chapter 13

Now Paul explains how God's righteousness as we live as sacrifices applies to our relationship with the government.

Vs 1-7. Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities because no authority exists unless God has given it permission to be governing. So anyone who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted and brings judgment upon himself. Rulers are God's servants to do good for those who do what is right, but they have the authority to punish, even by death, for wrong doing. We pay taxes because authorities are God's servants giving their full time to governing. So, if we owe taxes, pay them. If we owe revenue, pay it. And we should respect and honor those in authority.

Rome at that time was not acknowledging and following God, but as we look at the governing authorities of history as God revealed it to Nebuchadnezzar (Babylonians, Medes & Persians, Greeks, and Romans – Dan 2), we find that the world's governments will not be acknowledging and follow God. So we must not think Paul means all governing authorities are righteous. When Paul wrote this, the highest governing authority (Rome) was not actively persecuting and killing believers. So he didn't write about how to respond to an authority that God has allowed which is actively seeking to disobey God in all ways. How should we act in righteousness toward such a governing authority? From Daniel's example in dealing with the Babylonian authorities we see that we should give the authority respect and honor and use our influence to help them see God's way of living. But if the authority demands that we live in disobedience to God's will, then we must respectfully refuse and suffer whatever consequences are imposed upon us, even to being killed. That's what faced Daniel in the lions' den and God protected Daniel at that time. That's what Peter and John did before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4 when they were commanded to stop speaking about Jesus. That's what Christians throughout history have done. Give respect, honor, and obedience to the authority as long as the authority doesn't try to force disobedience of God. And if the authority does try to force disobedience of God, try to reason with them for following God, but our final step must always be to obey God even if it means death. Shortly after Paul's time, Rome began persecuting believers and killing them for not proclaiming "Caesar is lord" and thereby denying that Jesus is Lord. And for that they were crucified, killed by lions in the coliseum, and burned as torches in Caesar's garden. In 300 AD Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was burned at the stake because he would not deny Jesus as Lord. Still today, in countries around the world, believers are being killed because they will not deny Jesus and obey wicked authorities. We must always be seeking to change the minds of authorities from disobeying to obeying God. In the United States, we have the privilege of electing and influencing our governing authorities, but in other countries that is not the case. But if that fails, we must obey God at all costs because Jesus said: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt 10:28) And Paul wrote to the Corinthians (2 Cor 5:8-9) that being away from the body (death) means we are with the Lord. So we obey authorities, not because we agree with them but because we love God. And we try to speak to authorities about follow God because we love them and want what is best for them and for all people: to acknowledge God as our Lord and obey his good and perfect will.

So we are not to let any debt remain outstanding, whether it is to the government or to another person, except the continuing debt of loving them. The person who loves God fulfills the first four commandments of the law and loving his fellow man fulfills the other six commandments of the law. Thus love fulfills the law. Now Paul proclaims that we should live our righteousness in love before others because of our hope of our promise that will soon be fulfilled. He wants us to wake up from our slumber because our salvation (our being with the Lord for eternity) is nearer now than when we first believed. The dark (equated with lack of understanding and disobedience of God) is nearly over and the day (when God will assume control and make everything right) is almost here. So, we should have nothing to do with anything of the darkness, but clothe ourselves with Jesus (living in loving obedience to God's will is clothing ourselves with Jesus because that is how he lived). Even if the Lord waits to return until we have died, our being with him is closer than when we first believed. So while we wait, Paul urges us to put away from our lives anything that has to do with darkness and live only in the light of God's will.

Chapter 14

Now Paul explains how God's righteousness as we live as sacrifices applies to our relationship with believers who are weaker in their faith.

Vs 1-8. Some believers, especially newer ones, are weaker in their faith. They have more difficulty trusting God for every step of every day of their life. So their lives are not the living sacrifices that they should or could be. But Paul wants us to understand that their weakness is not a reason to pass judgment on them in matters about which God has not given clear commands – those that are disputable. He gives an example of someone whose faith allows him to eat everything and another whose faith only allow him to eat vegetables and concludes that neither can judge the other because only the servant's master (God) has the right to judge. Then he gives the example of considering one day more sacred than another and the example of eating meat or not eating meat. He concludes that each person must be convinced in his own mind that he is living as he does to please the Lord. So, as a believer, a person who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God should be trusting the Holy Spirit to direct them in how they live in matters about which God has not given a clear command and live according to how the Spirit has said they may live with respect to the faith they have at that time. In fact, if we live, we live to the Lord and if we die, we die to the Lord because we belong to the Lord.

Vs 9-12. Paul explains that Jesus died and returned to life so he could be the Lord of both the dead and the living. We shouldn't look down on a brother or judge him because we will all be judged at God's judgment seat. And he quotes Isaiah that every knee will bow and every tongue confess to God. Every person, whether believer or not, will bow their knee to God as having the authority to rule the universe and them personally, will confess that Jesus is Lord, and will give an account of their life to God.

Vs 13-23. Because of this, Paul indicates that we should not pass judgment on one another or put a stumbling block before someone that could cause them to fall in their relationship with God. Then he gives examples. All food is clean but if someone thinks a particular food is not clean, then for that person it is not clean. So, in that case, we should not prepare a meal for that person and include that food or we would be putting a stumbling block before them. The same would be true for openly boasting about a belief that all foods are clean and that we eat something that another believer thinks is unclean. Paul urges us to do what would be edifying and encouraging of each other rather than doing something that would cause another believer to fall. He says to keep what you believe about such divisive things between you and the Lord because everything that is not done in faith is sin.

Chapter 15

Vs 1-4. This continues his thoughts from the end of chapter 14 so it was a poor choice of places to put a chapter division. Those who are strong in faith need to bear with those whose faith is weaker and do what is possible to build up their faith. He quotes a Psalm (69:9) about insults on one person falling on another to indicate that Jesus didn't do just what would please himself. And then he reminds us that everything that was previously written as God's instructions was written to teach us also so that we might have encouragement and hope.

Vs 5-13. Now he offers a prayer that God would give us a spirit of unity so that we would accept one another and bring praise to God who gives us endurance and encouragement. This would be his encouragement for the Jews and Gentiles to accept each other's differences and bear with them rather than trying to get each other to change and become just like them. And he tells them to accept one another just as Christ has accepted each of them to bring praise to God. Then he quotes Hebrew scriptures to show that God has always reached out to Gentiles as well as Jews. And he ends with another prayer asking God to fill them with joy and peace as they trust him so that they will overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul doesn't mention this here but he alludes to it in chapter 12, the way of living in love toward other believers is exactly what Jesus said would be a witness to everyone that we are his followers. (John 15:34-35)

Now Paul concludes his letter by discussing his reasons for writing.

Vs 14-16. He says he has written quite boldly to them about some matters but that was only to remind them of what he believes they already knew and practiced. He did it because Jesus gave him the duty of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles so they might become an offering acceptable to God that has been sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Vs 17-22. Because of this calling from God, he will not boast about anything he has done, whether signs or miracles, except what Jesus had done through him by the power of the Holy Spirit to lead the Gentiles to obey God. He says it has always been his aim to preach the gospel where Jesus is not known so that he would not be building on someone else's work. And he says that is why he has been often hindered from visiting them. This may be seen as confirmation that they already have people there who know the gospel and teach it. That would also agree with his being able to write boldly to them about matters because he believed they knew and practiced them.

Vs 23-32. But now all of that is changing. He has told the gospel to all of the area where he has been working and he has been longing for many years to come and see them on his way to work among the people in Spain. He says that he is on his way to Jerusalem to deliver what has been collected to help the believers there and that he plans to visit them after that and hopes to get their help in his ministry in Spain. He expects to have some trouble with Jews in Jerusalem, so he asks them to pray that he will be rescued and that his service there will be acceptable so that he may join with them in Rome and be refreshed.

Chapter 16

Vs 1-16. Commending Phoebe to them is an indication that she was carrying his letter to them that he was writing during his stay in the Corinth and Cenchrea area. Then he sends greetings to believers he knows are in Rome, some of whom he indicates are his relatives (Andronicus and Junias, and Herodion). This list includes the first convert from the province of Asia (Epenetus). For each of these individuals, Paul has an encouraging word of praise for their life.

Vs 17-19. Paul gives one last encouragement to avoid those people who cause division and put obstacles in the way of believers because they are not doing the Lord's work. He notes that everyone (all in the province of Asia) have heard of the obedience of the Roman believers and so he is full of joy because of them.

Vs 20-21. Then he ends by encouraging them that "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" and asks God's grace to be with them. He then remembers to send greetings from the fellow workers with him (including three which he calls his relatives).

Vs 22-24. Now the secretary who is actually writing Paul's words on the scroll identifies himself and sends his greetings along with some others from the community.

Vs 25-27. This benediction is the official close of the letter and what Paul has told him to write as the closing. It proclaims that only God can establish them through the gospel that Paul teaches which he acknowledges has been hidden for long ages, but has now been revealed through prophetic writings by God's command so that everyone, everywhere can believe and obey. And Paul gives all glory for all that is done to God through Jesus.