Romans 1

"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God, which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Therefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."

Section 1

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

Paul

In early life Paul was known under his given Hebrew name as Saul. Paul was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, born a Roman citizen in the city of Tarsus, a rabbinical student of Gamaliel, became a Pharisee, and likely served on the Sanhedrin. However, inasmuch as he was prepared to serve the Jewish community as a lifelong Pharisee, he was intercepted by Jesus by divine decree and was converted to faith in Jesus as Messiah—as he journeyed to Damascus in order to persecute Jesus' followers.

We may suggest that Paul was (in earlier life) married. However, apparently he was left as single because of the death of his wife or divorced as the result of his graduated faith in Jesus (see 1 Corinthians 7:7–17).

None of this can be proven. However, we know that membership in the Sanhedrin required marriage, and thus we are left to surmising.

I bring this into focus in order to recognize that the called are imperfect people from varying backgrounds and earlier pre-Christian life contributions. However, despite the "good" or bad, God calls, saves, and uses the worst of sinners—like you and me.

Paul thought himself the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15–16). However, having been saved from the error of his Christ-rejecting past, he came to faith in his Messiah and identified himself as *"a bondservant of Jesus Christ."*

Paul's experience should be no different than ours. We (like Paul) have a past consisting of early life experiences, visions, and personal plans. However, once called by the Lord, we abandon our private ambitions and turn our lives over to Jesus. We are called to be servants of the Lord. We are commissioned to lay down our thought-to-be-purposes for the glory and praise of God. Our purpose is to serve the Lord with gladness and come before Him with thanksgiving (see Psalm 100).

A Bondservant

In order to understand the term *"bondservant,"* we need to reference the Old Covenant law of Moses.

In Exodus we read the following: *"Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them: If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door,*

or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever" (Exodus 21:1–6).

Therefore, with this in mind, we understand Paul's identification as a *"bondservant."* He was declaring his voluntary, forever slavery to Jesus Christ. He was a slave to sin and death—but had been set free from bondage, embraced the freedom provided in his Lord, and turned to the *"master"* as a *"bondservant"* for the rest of his mortal life—and the life to come.

Jesus Christ

Jesus is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Yeshua meaning Savior. The English would properly be Joshua. Christ is the Greek for the Hebrew Messiah meaning anointed. Jesus Christ is the anointed Son of God, the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the world (see 1 John 2:2).

Therefore, Paul was the *"bondservant"* to Jesus the Christ—the Messiah. Simply put, Jesus was the anointed Son of God who came into the world—not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (see John 3:16–18).

Six and Seven

Some might ask about the six years of slavery and the significance of the seventh year of freedom.

Six is the number of man, incompleteness, and toil. Man was created on the sixth day of creation. Throughout the Scriptures we find "six" in numerical consistency spanning Genesis to Revelation especially as it relates to the Sabbath—the seventh day of rest and completeness.

In the book of Revelation, John records that the number six is *"the number of man"* (see Revelation 13:18 where the Greek carries no definite article). The antichrist carries the number 666—the incomplete man who toils for self-exaltation and rule. However, he falls short, provides no rest, and will be defeated by our Lord.

My dispensational model shows the Tribulation as the sixth dispensation—wherein rebellious man is given what they long for: Christ-rejecting self-exaltation. However, their toil will fall short and end in destruction.

Those who realize the freedom we have in the Lord will enjoy the Sabbath-rest found only in Jesus. This is modeled in the seventh dispensation wherein those who love the Lord will enter into the fullness of the promises given every believer during the Millennial Reign of Christ. (See my book: "Called to Be Free—A Study in Dispensational Theology" for further information).

Therefore, I suggest that the pattern found in my Dispensational Model and the typology found in the Old Covenant Law regarding the *"bondservant"* point to the rest we have in Jesus. When Jesus is given His rightful place in our lives, as our Master, we come to know true rest and freedom as we serve Him.

An Apostle

As a called apostle, Paul was declaring himself as an appointed and "sent one." To the Galatians he wrote, that it *"pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles…"* (Galatians 1:15–16a) suggesting that he was foreknown to God and called (from outside of time) to belong to the Lord and serve Him as an Apostle. We have noted the (in time) call—as described by Paul in the book of Acts (see his accounts in Acts 9, 22, 26, and as

mentioned above under “Paul”).

Paul was called, elected and commissioned by God as an Apostle to the Gentiles—without discounting his personal passions and calling to the Jews (see Romans 11:13). Paul was a Jew and had tremendous concern for the salvation of Israel. Considerable attention will be given to this subject in chapters 9, 10, and 11.

Thoughts on Predestination and Foreknowledge

There are great numbers arguing predestination and foreknowledge. The debate gives focus to God’s sovereignty, His plan for the ages, His interactions with man, and how He intended/intends to call man, save man, use man, and mark off in advance the eternal destination of man. Many believers divide over these topics! Frankly, a careful student of the Scriptures could make great strides in building the case for opposing sides of the subject. However, two opposing opinions suggest error in one or both positions.

We must remember that God has a complete and detailed foreknowledge of all things. This includes mankind with the encompassing knowledge of what each man will do, be, and become. God knows all that man will learn, how he will respond to that information, his understanding of his worldview, the influences of his environment, and in particular—the Gospel. God knows in advance who will trust Him for salvation and who won’t. He knows in advance where every man and woman will spend eternity.

This being said, we must also remember that God does not act randomly with or toward His creation. He has predetermined His purposes and plans for creation and will accomplish all He intends to do. However, this fact troubles many and inspires a fatalistic view of the salvific purposes and plans of God. It leads many to believe that ministry and evangelism are therefore mute and unnecessary. Far be it from the truth!

Although God has foreknowledge, His foreknowledge is a pre-knowing of what was, what is, and what will be. It is not a speculative fore-knowing of all that might be, all that could be, or all that may have been. It is a foreknowledge of what is actual and true, occurring in time, before time began. Therefore, what occurs in time must still occur—as foreknown—not *because* it is foreknown, but because it *is*.

This fact does not suggest that God does not or will not intervene in the affairs of man. God’s interactions with man, in time, are known to Him from all eternity past. Therefore, His interactive work may still cause man to look to Him, respond to Him, or allow Him to use men for His purposes.

On the other hand, these facts do not tell us that God intentionally or irrefusably damns some men or women to hell. (This concept is referred to as Double Predestination.) The recognition of God’s sovereignty is easily supported by Scripture, but the Bible contains no teaching or indication that God has withheld the hope of salvation to any man. Sadly, this by-product is what some will suggest.

Many naturally hold to the view that an equal and opposite response to the sovereignty of God described above requires an equal opposing action. This is not the case.

We know that John 3:16 is true, says what it means and means what it says. We also know that *“whosoever”* means any, all, whoever. Moreover, we know that God *“desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Timothy 2:4). Therefore, human logic, reason, and rational, must be superseded by the truth we know from the clearly written Scriptures.

God called Paul to be an apostle because He *"desires all men to be saved."* And, in that calling, He sovereignly pre-ordained that calling and election from eternity past, based upon His great foreknowledge, even before Paul had taken his first breath.

As mentioned above, Paul said that, *"it pleased God, who separated [him] from [his] mother's womb and called [him] through His grace, [in order] to reveal His Son in [him], that [he] might preach Him among the Gentiles…"* (Galatians 1:15–16a). Why? Because God wanted to use Paul to share the Good News with all of mankind. Therefore, He chose him (among others) to do it. The Divine intervention did not prevent others from hearing and/or believing. The Divine intervention was for that very reason—that others might believe.

Separated

Paul, having been "hand-picked by God" for the proclamation of the Gospel, was separated from other purposes that he might be a focused and useful vessel fit for the master's use.

All believers are set up to engage in ministry. Some with occupational focus. All believers share the Gospel, minister to the needs of others, serve in ministry, etc. However, some believers are divinely inspired to serve the Lord in a full-time capacity—separated capacity. Those thus employed by the Lord must be careful to attend to the ministry without distraction.

Ministers who get distracted with personal interests and passions fail to remain focused on the purpose to which God has called them. This should not occur!

Paul did make tents when necessary in order to unburden the churches (see Acts 20:34, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, 2 Thessalonians 3:8). However, he did not have a side "gig" or hobby. He was sold out as a *"bondservant," "separated to the Gospel of God."*

The Gospel of God

The Gospel of God must be understood through the finer picture of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel of God is the whole of Scripture with the integrated prophetic plan of redemption in primary focus. Jesus is central to the Gospel of God, and the cross is the central theme of redemption. This is that "*which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead* (vss. 2–4).

Promised

Paul reminded the Romans that the plan of God (the Gospel of God) contained no afterthought. His plan was laid out long before creation.

The fact that man would fail and need redemption was no surprise. It was foreknown and planned for. This Paul explained! Moreover, if man had not been allowed to fall, no human being would know anything of God's grace, mercy, forgiveness, redemption and restoration. God, foreknowing that man would rebel against His command, allowed such, in order to show the whole world (corporate and individual) aspects of His character we would otherwise have never seen—or experienced.

A Cruel Game?

Some have or will accuse the Lord of cruelty and evil as the result this allowance—but they are wrong! God did not cause the fall, nor has He left man without hope. He promised and provides the hope of redemption—the hope Paul proclaimed in Jesus. The consequences of sin are severe. However, they cause mankind to long for deliverance. The pains, suffering, sickness, and death we suffer are miserable attributes of the fall. However, the foreknown plan of God allowed for the fall and its associated consequences in order to call men to the promised Savior—Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Redeemer God *"promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures* (vs. 2). The promises were *"concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"* (vss. 3–4).

The promise of redemption in Jesus is woven throughout the Old Testament Scriptures—beginning just after the fall. In Genesis we read, *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel"* (Genesis 3:15). Thereafter, we can detail hundreds of passages describing the birth, life, miracles, message, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. The promises Paul declared are, as he wrote, *"in the Holy Scriptures"* (vs. 2b). We may correctly argue that the whole of Old Testament scripture is a historical/prophetic documentation of the promised Messiah.

Jesus, The Seed of David According to the Flesh

Nathan the prophet was commanded to tell King David, *"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom"* (2 Samuel 7:12).

Jeremiah prophesied, *"'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS"* (Jeremiah 23:5–6).

Isaiah declared, *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this"* (Isaiah 9:6–7).

Therefore, one must prove that Jesus is rightful heir to the throne as "the son of David."

The whole of the Old Testament, *"the Holy Scriptures"* (vs. 3), is summarized by Matthew and Luke.

Matthew documented the Messianic requirement by federal headship through Jesus' adoptive father Joseph (see Matthew 1:1–17). Matthew traces Jesus' lineage back to Abraham—the father of the nation and people of Israel. However, Joseph was not the physical father of Jesus. Therefore, we look to Luke.

Luke documented the Messianic *"seed of David"* requirement through Jesus' physical birth through Mary—thus, "*according to the flesh,"* (see Luke 3:23–38). Luke traces Jesus' lineage back to Adam.

The Messiah's lineage is documented throughout the whole of *"the Holy Scriptures."* Therefore, we must note that Jesus' family history is a fundamental facet of the whole of the Old Testament.

Jesus, The Son of God

The fact that Jesus is *"the Son of David according to the flesh"* (vs. 3) was not the only necessary requirement of the Messiah—He must also be *"the Son of God"* (vs. 4).

If Jesus were the Son (descendant) of David without being the incarnation of God Himself—as *"the Son of God"*—He would be unqualified to save and would not be the promised Messiah. No mere man could fulfill the prophecies "*promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures"* (vs. 2). If Jesus taught with excellence, performed miracles, died on a cross, and even rose from the dead as nothing more than a descendant of David, mankind would be hopelessly lost. The nature and deity of Jesus cannot be compromised.

Jesus (as the Son of David and Son of God) is the most important attribute of Christian doctrine. The "hypostatic-union" describes the miraculous nature of Jesus as fully God and fully man—existing in one unified person.

The genealogical records of Matthew and Luke document the natural genealogy of Jesus as *"the Son of David according to the flesh"* (vs. 3). However, all four Gospel writers declare Jesus as the *"Son of God."*

Matthew records Jesus when on trial before Caiaphas (the High Priest) declaring Himself to be *"the Son of God." "…the high priest answered and said to Him, 'I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!' Jesus said to him, 'It is as you said.'"* (Matthew 26:63b–64a). Mark begins his account writing, *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"* (Mark 1:1). Luke recorded the angelic announcement of the virgin birth. To Mary the angel said, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God"* (Luke 1:35b). John included Jesus' words when He declared Himself "*the only begotten Son of God."* He said, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"* (John 3:16–18).

Paul wrote to the Colossians saying, *"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"* (Colossians 2:8–9).

Jesus, God the Son

John wrote, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, "He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me."' And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through

Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, "After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me." I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.'

And John bore witness, saying, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God'" (John 1:1–18, 29–34).

With authority we can declare that Jesus is the Son of God and also declare that Jesus is God the Son. For *"the Word was God…and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*

Born of A Virgin

The fact that Jesus is both a descendant of "*David according to the flesh"* and equally *"the Son of God"* required a virgin birth.

Isaiah recorded, *"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14). Micah wrote, *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."* (Micah 5:2).

Luke recorded, *"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!' But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end"* (Luke 1:26–33).

Jesus—born of a virgin, fully God and fully man! Indeed, the greatest miracle. Indisputable, immutable, essential. Jesus—the promised Seed who will crush Satan's head.

The Resurrection of Jesus

The physical resurrection of Jesus is easily among the most documented and provable events in history. No honest thinking person can deny it! In fact, manifold testimonies of sceptics attempting to disprove the resurrection have turned to faith in Jesus as the result of careful study and contemplation.

When Paul wrote that Jesus was *"declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"* (vs. 4), we say a hearty amen! Jesus' supernatural physical resurrection climactically demonstrated Jesus' deity and purposed salvific work.

Apologetics experts quickly agree to the fact that every claim Jesus made, and every doctrinal position held by the Apostles, was supported by and defended by the resurrection. Indeed, Jesus' resurrection was, in effect, the last word concerning His deity, virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, teaching, vicarious sufferings, death

and burial, ascension, and soon return. Moreover, our salvation is contingent on the resurrection. For, *"If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!" "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."* (1 Corinthians 15:14–17, 20a).

The *"power"* that caused the physical *"resurrection" of Jesus* was the *"power"* of the Holy Spirit. Paul made this clear when he wrote, *"…if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you"* (Romans 8:11). Thus we know that the Holy Spirit was the active agent Who physically raised Jesus from the dead. However, we cannot discount the work of the Father and that of Jesus Himself.

In the introduction of the letter to the Galatians we read, *"Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)"* (Galatians 1:1). Thus, *"God the Father…raised Him from the dead."* We also note Jesus saying, *"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father"* (John 10:17–18). Therefore, we must conclude that the *"power"* was manifested by the Holy Spirit through the *"power"* of the unified Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In the Psalms we read, *"Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore"* (Psalm 16:9–11).

Many understand that most of the Psalms are the prayers of Jesus, written in real time, as inspired from outside time, literally offered as prayers in real time, in due time, during Jesus' first incarnational ministry.

Our Resurrection too!

Above we noted that *"…if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you"* (Romans 8:11). Herein we also note a promise to us. We too will experience a physical resurrection through the "power" of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:50–58).

Apostleship

The mention of "apostleship" applied to Paul and his ministry companions. He and they were the

commissioned ones. Moreover, it has been documented that Paul was sent to the Gentile nations (Galatians 1:15–16a) whereas *"all nations"* is significant—Israel and all others.

Grace for Obedience to the Faith

With certainty we understand that *"grace…for obedience to the faith"* (vs. 5) is the prerequisite to any salvation experience and certainly to any service. For *"…God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:4–7), and, as Paul wrote, *"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry"* (1 Timothy 1:12). The same is true for you and me! We cannot serve the Lord without first being given *"grace…for obedience to the faith"* and then being *"enabled"* by His power to serve; *"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:13).

To the Romans Paul wrote, "*you also are the called of Jesus Christ"* (vs. 6). Within this opening statement we have the first reference to the Roman recipients being believers. This letter was written to Christians in Rome—"*to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints"* (vs. 7). With this in mind, we can read their mail and learn much that will apply to us! We who have trusted Christ for salvation have been given *"grace…for obedience to the faith"* and have been *"enabled"* by His power to serve—and serve we will!

Grace and Peace

As was customary, Paul began most of his letters with the salutation "*grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*" (vs. 7). The exceptions were 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus when he included *"mercy."* Rightly so! For all called into public and occupational ministry need *"grace, mercy, and peace."*

The *"grace"* mentioned here must not be limited to the prerequisite grace mentioned above, but include also the enabling grace that transforms, encourages, empowers, and sustains the believer. *"Peace"* is enabled by such *"grace"* and allows the believer to enjoy quietness of soul while enduring hardship or experiencing pleasure, while serving or resting, and in particular while anticipating physical death or the soon coming of the Lord.

Sadly, far too many believers have been given *"grace…for obedience to the faith"* through the Holy Spirit but have fallen short of experiencing "*peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"* to which they rightly qualify.

Numbers of reasons may be given for a shortfall of *"peace."* Some may fall short of peace because of direct disobedience and the associated "grief" of the Holy Spirit, and some as the result of the Lord's directive work—as He leads us through and to His purposes and plans. Others "fall short" by virtue of limited knowledge or false teaching. Whatever the case, Paul prayed that the Roman believers may experience God's *"grace and peace."* I pray this for you too!

Section 2

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'" (vss. 8–17).

Thankful for Spiritual Impact

The Roman Christians had such an impact on the then-known world that Paul mentioned *"*[their] *faith [was] spoken of throughout the whole world."* (vs. 8).

As a small and persecuted group, the Roman Christians demonstrated a testimony worthy of the Holy Spirit's mention. It may have been Paul who put this into the record, but God (as we know) inspired that which was written—the Scriptures.

Inasmuch as we are hard pressed to document the numerical size of the first century Roman Church, we are certain that hundreds (maybe more) were martyred. We know that many were fed to the lions and dogs, others were crucified, many burned alive, etc. Over the first 300 years of Church history, thousands were persecuted and martyred. It seems that *their* faith was worth dying for—a lesson many American Christians should learn. We should all be willing to "believe and receive" from the Lord, and also willing to live for and/or die for Him.

Paul wrote, *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Philippians 1:21), and believed that *"the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Romans 8:18).

Prayer

Paul prayed for the believers in Rome—as he did for the Church at large. He wrote, "*For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers"* (vs. 9). Moreover, God was Paul's witness to the prayers he offered. God hears and answers prayer. Prayers offered to the Lord are prayers of significance. Prayer in and of itself carries no innate power. It is the one to whom prayers are offered that makes the requests significant.

Paul knew that the Romans would be encouraged by the knowledge of his prayers for them. The same would be true for us! We are encouraged when we know that prayers are being offered for us.

The Roman Christians needed the Spirit's intervention and sustaining power—without which there would have been no fruit in the Gospel, no encouragement in the faith, no empowerment for service, and no enabling as they endured persecution. Therefore, Paul prayed and God answered! It is certain that the small

group in Rome were empowered by the Lord. In no other way would their faith be spoken of throughout the whole world.

We too need the Spirit's work in and through our lives. If we are to be potent the Lord (or shall I say, God potent through us), it will only be through the power of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who will lead, guide, teach, direct, empower, sustain, encourage, and produce the fruit of ministry. Therefore, we pray. Therefore we pray for one another.

Paul was comforted through the prayers of the Church. He rested in the knowledge that prayers were offered for him. He wrote, "I know that…through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death." (Philippians 1:19–20 abridged).

Physical Posture?

Some have taught that the Lord will take the prayers of His saints more seriously if prayers are offered via some specified physical position. However, they are wrong! Prayer is not limited to posture or location. Prayer is a spirit-born, spirit-led act of the spiritual/inner man—in submission to the will of God. The physical body may assume many positions. However, prayer offered to God is an exercise of the inner man—the true "us"—led by the Spirit.

The position one takes in prayer whether sitting, standing, kneeling, laying prostrate, etc., may or may not assist the believer in focus when praying—for the body can be a distraction. It seems best to suggest this is why Paul coupled the fact that he "*serve[d] with [his] spirit in the gospel of His Son"* with the prayers being offered. Prayer is a spiritual exercise—not simply mental and not physical!

The mind while a spiritual/invisible entity is an information system stored in the physical body and directly entwined to the human spirit. Therefore, the mind must be engaged in prayer. However, the mind can also be a distraction if we allow our thoughts to wander. Therefore, prayer requires focus and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Two things must be considered here.

1) Prayers *of* the Spirit

   Paul wrote, *"…the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"* (Romans 8:26).

   This is clearly Holy Spirit intercession *"for us."*

   Who can fully explain such things? What we know is what is said: The Holy Spirit prays for us.

2) Prayers *with* the Spirit

Paul wrote, *"For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding"* (1 Corinthians 14:14–15).

However, not all have been given the "gift of tongues." Paul mentioned this when he wrote, *"Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?"* (1 Corinthians 12:30b). Therefore, prayer should be offered through the Spirit and *"with… understanding."*

The Lord directs us as we pray through the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, as we pray we should be spiritually and mentally responsive to the Lord. He will allow us to pray under the directives of the Spirit, in the Spirit, and by the engagement of our inner man "our spirit" and by the engagement of the mind.

Life in the Spirit

Prayer is a spiritual exercise, so is the whole of the Christian life. Paul said that he "served" the Lord "with his spirit"—not simply in or of his physical body. The Christian life is not limited to the soul—the mind. The Christian experience is a spiritual experience. Of certainty the body and mind are called into submission to the Spirit/spirit, but the idea that the service of God is simply mental and physical makes "the faith" a human-centric earthly religion.

Horizontal to the Demise of the Vertical

Some sects of "Christianity today" proclaim (with great energy) the "so-called-gospel" of "health and wealth." Within these groups much attention is given to "your best life" in the here and now—the horizontal /temporal/earthly. This false gospel contradicts the message of the spiritual life—to which we are called. One can be rich, healthy, fit in body, intelligent, educated, and exercise logic, yet remain spiritually poor. (This was the problem within the "church of the Laodiceans" [see Revelation 3:14–22].) The Christian life does enhance temporal/natural things, but it is the world of the spirit that should get the greater attention.

Please recall Paul's injunction that *"bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come"* (1 Timothy 4:8). James wrote, *"For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away"* (James 4:14b). To the Colossians Paul wrote, *"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory"* (Colossians 3:2–4). Therefore, we note that our truest "self" (while involving body and mind) is a spiritual "self." Our "life" is a "spiritual life." The mind will be renewed, and the body will be resurrected, but the spirit (the real you) has been born again according to the working of the Spirit of God.

Desired Fellowship—In the Son

The Gospel through which Paul had been transformed was his very life. It was the motivation for his thankfulness, prayers, and desire for fellowship with the Roman believers, writing, *"if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For, I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me"* (vs. 10–12). God would answer his prayers—but not exactly as Paul intended (see Acts 26:19–28:31).

Mutual Faith

Fellowship in the Lord is tremendously beneficial to the saints, and ministry between believers is a blessing—a triple blessing. Those who serve are blessed, those being served are blessed, and both bless the Lord. Paul knew this! Therefore, Paul's anticipation of sharing of the *"mutual faith,"* and impartation of mutually enjoyed spiritual gifts, excited him. He wanted to build up the Romans and knew he would be greatly encouraged himself. Herein Paul demonstrated our need for each other. No man or woman is an island. *"As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend"* (Proverbs 27:17).

Our Plans and The Sovereign Will of God

Paul's desire to be with the Romans was earlier thwarted and would be again—in spite of the fact that he wrote, "*Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now)"* (vs. 13a). Inasmuch as Paul intended to get to the Romans sooner than later, *"now"*, the plans would nonetheless be hindered again. We know from the book of Acts (mentioned above: Acts 26:19–28:31) that Paul would eventually make it to Rome—but not on the timeline or through the means he desired. Paul was arrested—spent some time incarcerated in Jerusalem (Acts 21:26–23:24) and then again for over two years in Caesarea (Acts 23:32–26:32). Later, he was "delivered" to Rome.

It is of note that Paul as well as you and I will plan our lives, but God still rules the day. May we remember that *"A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps"* (Proverbs 16:9). Therefore, we should "acknowledge Him in all our ways, and He will direct our paths" (see Proverbs 3:6).

Paul's desire for a fruitful experience in Rome was not lost—only delayed. He had planned for fruitfulness writing, "*that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles"* (vs. 13b), but the "fruit" would be generated on the timeline of God's choosing—rather than by the timeline Paul anticipated. This letter produced fruit—and still does. However, his "late" physical presence in Rome proved to be tremendous. When Paul finally made it to Rome, he ministered to the palace guards (Philippians 1:13), served many Roman saints (Acts 28:30–31), and (while incarcerated) wrote the letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. We can all be thankful for the fruit God produced in and through the Apostle.

Debt?

Paul's debt to mankind was his own assessment. He wrote, "*I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise"* (vs. 14). Paul felt a debt to mankind—for withholding the truth from others would be wrong; it would equate to robbery. However, Paul was not in debt to Christ. This fact may seem strange to many, but debt implies payment—and payment ignores grace.

Later in this epistle we read, *"Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt"* (Romans 4:4). Therefore, *"…if [salvation is] by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work"* (Romans 11:6).

Paul's so-called "debt" to the Greeks and barbarians, and/or the wise and unwise, was an expression of passion for the lost. It was another way of saying, "It would be wrong not to share what I have received. I owe every Gentile the message of hope we have in Jesus."

Paul was commissioned with the message—and was "compelled" to "go" to the Jew first and also the Gentile. However, it was not a requirement for obtaining salvation—nor for the keeping of it. His indebtedness was an offering, motivated by love, as an act of worship, and desire to see others come to Christ.

Why make a point of this? Because salvation is a gift and a gift cannot be earned. A "debt" in response to a gift insults the giver—and diminishes the value of that which is "given." Moreover, the "gift" would no longer be a "gift." It would be an earned possession.

The Barbarians too?

The Greeks thought of non-Greeks as unsophisticated barbarians, thus the wise and unwise. Therefore, his thinking was Greek in nature (for the sake of the Roman Gentiles) when he wrote these words. He was called to share the Gospel—and all its included doctrines with everyone. Not to the Jews alone, nor just to the Greeks—but to all.

Therefore, he wrote, "*So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also"* (vs. 15).

Unashamed of the Gospel

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

It seems best to suggest that *"from faith to faith"* is an expression signifying "from beginning to end" or "from inception to climactic result." The work is a work of God from beginning to end.

The capacity to believe has been enabled/empowered by God. Were it not for His creative design, His desire to make Himself known, His grace and mercy demonstrated, and thereby receiving all the glory, man would be incapable of perceiving, knowing, and/or desiring God—and the salvation He alone provides. Therefore, the capacity to exercise faith is attributed to God (see Romans 12:3). The knowledge of God is given to everyone (see Romans 1:18–23), but our response to Him must be exercised by God-enabled personal/individual faith. The exercise of faith (in God—and the work He accomplished in Christ) results in salvation. For this reason, Paul wrote, "*The just shall live by faith"* (vs. 17b).

The Gospel

The Gospel is the message about the means (propitiation) of salvation. The power of God is manifest in the means (see 1 Corinthians 15:1–4). The proclamation of the Gospel provides the hope of salvation—and is therefore Paul's declared work of proclamation, *"for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes"* (vs. 16b). And, *"in it the righteousness of God is revealed"* (vs. 17a). For this reason, he wrote that he was *"not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ"* (vs. 16a).

The Gospel is the message about the grace and mercy of God manifest in the results—"salvation"—accomplished by Christ.

Mankind cannot be saved by works. Mankind is not saved because of the person's "worth." Mankind is only saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, as declared in the Scriptures alone, for the glory of God alone. Indeed, *"the just shall live by faith"* (vs. 17b) in (and only through) Jesus Christ.

The Message of Hope

As mentioned above, salvation is proclaimed in the Gospel—the Gospel set in motion before the foundation of the world, as the foreordained plan of God, based upon His foreknowledge. God knows the end from the beginning—and therefore the failures of man, the result of our failures, our need for redemption, and His solution in Christ.

Peter documented that, *"…you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God"* (1 Peter 1:18–21).

God told Isaiah, *"Remember this, and show yourselves men; recall to mind, O you transgressors. Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure"* (Isaiah 46:8–10).

The revelation of God began at creation, in the Garden of Eden, with Adam and his wife Eve and continued down throughout their progeny to Noah, his family, their families, and throughout the generations until Babel. Thereafter, God, in a continuing revelation of Himself, chose Abraham, his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob. Jacob's sons (fathers to the tribes of Israel) developed into the promised nation through whom the nations of the earth would be blessed.

To Abraham God said, *"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 12:2–3). The nation is Israel, the people are the Jews, and the nations are the Gentiles. God's covenant with Israel was intended to show Himself to the descendants of Abraham, and through them make Himself known to the world. Therefore, Paul wrote that the Gospel must go to the "*Jew first [then] also [to] the [Gentile]"* (vs. 16).

God planned for the redemption of mankind, through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, who was prophesied to be the physical descendant of King David, a descendant of Abraham—and that *"salvation is of the Jews"* (see John 4:22). Therefore, Paul (himself a Jew) was unashamed to proclaim the Gospel to the Jews *"first"* (as God's covenant people) and *"also"* to the Gentiles—for in Jesus, *"all the nations of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 18:18, 22:18, 26:4). Moreover, Paul desired that the Gentiles should know that God planned this redemption through the Jewish people.

The Jews were to be honored by the Romans (and all of us). *"Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God"* (Romans 3:2b).

Now, in the Church Age, by grace, the believing Gentiles are "grafted into the root and fatness" of the blessings and riches earlier believed to be exclusively for the Jews (see Romans 11).

For this reason, Paul wrote, *"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ"* (Ephesians 2:11–13).

Summary and Development

At this point in our study we have essentially covered an introduction to the elaborations found in the chapters of this book. All herein is explained in great detail, verse by verse, and chapter by chapter.

Section 3

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Therefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them" (Romans 1:18–32).

The Wrath of God

The *"wrath of God is [and will be] revealed from heaven against all ungodliness"* (vs. 18). Wrath is God's righteous anger against sin and sinful man.

Not the Wrath of Satan

The *"wrath of God"* is *"revealed from heaven."* This distinguishes it from the wrath of Satan—that he pours out "into the earth"—to its greatest extent during the coming Tribulation (see Revelation 12:12). Satan pours out his wrath being filled with fury in defeat; God pours out His wrath being filled with love in victory. Victory over sin, death, and hell—motivated by love!

Wrath in Contrast to Judgment

Wrath may be distinguished from judgment in several ways. Judgment is the method of decision-making God employs based upon His holy standard. Therefore, God's anger (wrath) against sin is based upon the fact that He is the righteous judge. The Psalmist wrote, *"God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day"* (Psalm 7:11).

God's wrath is based upon His judgment. Actions taken are the result.

Consequences

It is commonly believed that "wrath" is the "consequence." This confusion has led to misunderstandings. Consequences are the result of judgment and wrath. The wrath itself is anger, and the judgment is the decision. We must understand that the consequences follow judgment.

A believer may experience the consequences of his or her sin by way of the disciplinary actions of God—for God does chasten those He loves. However, believers are not disciplined in wrath. Believers are lovingly chastened in order to bring to repentance and maturity God's people. Paul wrote, *"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

God poured out His wrath upon Jesus for us. He is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2). Therefore, God's righteous indignation having been poured out on Jesus for us has allowed His wrath and coming judgment to pass from us. Moreover, God has made a judgment about the believer and has declared us righteous—in Jesus. Therefore, we will not suffer God's wrath or future judgment. His decision about us has already been made—we are His, made clean, and have nothing to fear. Jesus said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life"* (John 5:24).

However, the rebellious are still under wrath, will face a future judgment, and suffer the consequences of their sins. John the Baptist said, *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him"* (John 3:36).

Paul's review points out why the unrepentant will suffer the wrath of God, *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness"* (vs. 18). They refuse God's grace; they suppress the truth; they remain ungodly.

Righteousness Demonstrated

The righteousness of God is revealed in the demonstration of His love: mercy, atoning propitiation, grace, forgiveness, redemption, justification, adoption, and glorification. The wrath of God is revealed as a demonstration of His holy hatred: righteous judgment against sin, vengeance upon unrepentant sinners, justice, and vindication.

God must judge sin and therefore sinners. His great love has been demonstrated in His creation and pronounced definitively in Christ. Those who refuse to acknowledge God and place their faith in Jesus must suffer His wrath. Were this not the case, God would violate His character (by ignoring justice and holy standard)—making God Himself sinful. Justice demands judgment! However, the judgment of God was poured out upon Christ for us—*"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world"* (1 John 2:2). Therefore, mankind is offered redemption through the judgment Jesus took, in our place, for our sin.

Jesus suffered the wrath of God for us. Those who trust Him for salvation escape the coming wrath as a result. Those who refuse to believe place themselves in the direct path of God's holy anger, judgment, and wrath.

Chronological Order

The righteousness of God is *"revealed"* in a biblically defined chronology:

1) The righteousness of God was revealed in creation.

2) The righteousness of God was revealed in the perfect condition of His creation.

3) The righteousness of God was revealed when He allowed man the choice to sin—and to suffer sin's consequences.

4) The righteousness of God is revealed in His provision for redemption from sin.

5) The righteousness of God is revealed in His wrath upon those who refuse the provisions He has made.

6) The wrath of God <u>is</u> revealed from heaven by the removal of restraining grace—allowing a hardening of the heart, thereby causing rebellious man to fall deeper and deeper into depravity while suffering its temporal consequences.

7) The wrath of God <u>will be</u> revealed from heaven in the coming eschaton—when God causes rebellious man to fall deeper and deeper into depravity while suffering its eternal consequences.

8) The righteousness of God will be climactically and fully revealed through His promised redemption of all believers, their coming reward, and the complete restoration of all things.

The Knowledge of God—Man Without Excuse

All men have the knowledge of God (vss. 19–21). Some *"suppress the truth in unrighteousness"* (vs. 18) and are therefore without excuse concerning the coming judgment sinful man rightly deserves (vs. 27).

The atheist is a fraud. Those who declare they "believe" there is no God are denying their own God-designed knowledge of His person—"*what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse"* (vss. 19–20). *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge"* (Psalm 19:1–2).

The agnostic is at least honest—declaring ignorance. Agnostic simply means "without knowledge." However, even the agnostic has the knowledge of God built within—but has not taken the time or energy to investigate truth and come to the right conclusions.

Unfair?

The declaration concerning the wrath of God may seem unsettling. Some would suggest that God is "unfair" to judge and pour out His wrath upon rebellious man. However, He has every reason to pass judgment. Man is justly given the consequences deserved.

The wrath of God is also insightful. It declares His righteous love for mankind, and the graciousness He extended by allowing man to reject, suppress, and walk away from the truth—even if it means their rebellion is to their own demise.

Section 4

On the Fallen Nature of Man—Man's Downward Fall

We can chart the depravity of rebellious man as follows:

Knowledge and Intellect (vss. 18–20)

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."

The rebellious *"suppress the truth in unrighteousness"* (vs. 18). Therefore, the truth is known—by all. Therefore, mankind is *"without excuse"* (vs. 20). Creation declares the glory of God. No thinking person can deny that creation exists by design—and therefore, there is a designer.

Intentional "Ignorance" (vss. 21–23)

"Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things."

The rebellious, refusing to *"glorify God"* (vs. 21a), suffer, as *"their foolish hearts were [are] darkened"* (vs. 21b)—giving place to the enemy, and thus, intentionally became/become fools. When this occurs, mankind declines into idolatry—the worship of things created by man—rather than the worship of man's Creator.

(It should be noted here that Paul has moved from present tense to illustrative past tense language. Therefore, we must look at what God has done in the past as a lesson on what He will do in the future.)

Sinful Indulgences (vss. 24–25)

"*Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."*

As mentioned above, God has (in love) graciously allowed man to choose to trust Him—or rebel. Those who refuse to trust Him do or will decline into an ever-darkening sinfulness—even to the point of believing *"the lie"* over and against *"the truth."* The *"lie"* declares that man is above and independent of God. Some have gone as far as to declare that God is the invention of man. Therefore, the natural development of sinful man is to worship and serve the *"creature rather than the Creator."*

As a symptom of human depravity, sexual/sensual promiscuity rises. Men (and women) are overcome with lusts and worship at the throne of the created and seek self-glory, self-pleasure, and self-gratification.

Any people who live in a darkened spiritual condition are a people of immoral sexual thought and practice.

Vile Passions (vss. 26–27)

"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."

Lust is ever insatiable. Sexual/sensual pleasure is spiritually unsatisfying and leave the "seeker" looking for more. As cited herein, we learn that homosexuality is the result of the rebellious heart turned against the Lord. Men with men and women with women is a symptom of the debased spiritual life and rebellion against God.

Heterosexual promiscuity and homosexual behavior is the result of "worshipping and serving the creature over and against the Creator"—as declared. The fact that homosexuality is considered a "vile passion" contrary to God's original design should cause everyone to reject such behavior. Moreover, God has declared that there are "penalties" directly associated with these sins.

Impenitence (vss. 28–32)

"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."

Rebellion against God is a deepening pit. Herein we see that those willing to refuse the Lord will fall deeper and deeper into evil and, moreover, seek for and applaud the engagement of others.

Well Deserved Wrath

The *"wrath of God"* is justified. It is right for God to be angry and that His judgments fit each person appropriately. Even the smallest rebellious act is worthy of God's divine displeasure.

There is no question about the fact that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (see Ezekiel 33:11 and 1 Timothy 2:3–4). However, the righteousness of God demands justice—and therefore wrath, judgment, and consequence upon those who reject the gracious provisions given us in Jesus.

Before We Move On

Paul wanted all the Romans to understand their depravity and then to respond to the offer of salvation—for all have sinned. His thesis herein draws us to the needed conclusions found in a full understanding of the entire Gospel narrative.

If mankind had not "fallen" into sin, we would have never needed salvation. If we did not need salvation, we would never have seen or experienced the love, mercy, grace, compassion, and forgiveness God desired to reveal to us.